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15 Ways You Can Make a Difference
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'They've Really Put the Doormat Out for You'



Senior Airman Thomas Pollreis, center, with Barry and Patty Dobbins at the couple's home in Yorktown, Va., May 6, 2017. He met them in fall 2015 through the area's Adopt an Airman program, which matches Joint Base Langley-Eustis airmen with local families who have what Bruce Sturk, who runs the program for the city of Hampton, calls a "soft spot" for welcoming service members to the community. *America's Defense Communities* photo by Christopher Wright.

Looking back on it now, Patty Dobbins said she felt "stuck in a cave" in her first Navy dorm, with little opportunity to explore beyond the gate. Her now-husband, Barry Dobbins, also a Navy veteran, agreed.

"I left home and didn't see my parents for a year," Barry said. "Having somebody you could have hung out with or if you had a home to go to away from the Navy, it would have been very helpful."

Given their experience, the Dobbinses jumped at the chance to create that home for someone else when they heard about the Adopt an Airman partnership between the city of Hampton, Va., and Joint Base Langley-Eustis. The Dobbinses live about 20 miles away in Yorktown and were among the first families to sign up. They were introduced to Senior Airman Thomas Pollreis at a community meeting, and they hit it off right away.

A few weeks later, he had earned a seat at the Dobbins family's Thanksgiving table and began to see them as "a family away from family." He became friends with their grown children. He and Patty go to church together. He and Barry watch football, even though Thomas is a Vikings fan and Barry roots for the Seahawks.

"They're a part of my life for good now," Pollreis said.

When Adopt an Airman started in 2015, Bruce Sturk, who manages the program for the city of Hampton, hoped to make 10 airman-family matches. Two years later, they have lined up more than 70 matches, thanks largely to the excitement at the community level.

Master Sgt. Michael Brimhall, who helps manage Adopt an Airman at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, said "even if it's just being comfortable in somebody else's house—if

that's all you're after as an airman—the Hampton area community, they've really put the doormat out for you."

But it's also about stronger communities and stronger bases. The outreach and relationships lead to "resilient airmen and a resilient community," Joint Base Langley-Eustis Command Chief Sgt. Kennon D. Arnold told us.

Welcome home. Two words that have a powerful meaning to military families. They also represent a responsibility that America's defense communities take seriously. By creating great places for our military to call home, communities play a critical role in supporting our military readiness, and providing the quality of life our service members and their families deserve.

In this issue of *America's Defense Communities*, you'll meet more people like Patty and Barry Dobbins, Senior Airman Pollreis, Sturk, Master Sgt. Brimhall and Chief Sgt. Arnold who embody the "welcome home" spirit across the country. These are the stories of ADC's 2017 Great American Defense Communities—but in each there are lessons for every place that the military calls home.

You also will meet four individuals whose extraordinary achievements have earned them this year's Defense Community Awards for outstanding leadership.

I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to celebrate the great things that are happening across the United States to make our service members, their families and those who have served feel at home in our communities.

Tim Ford

Tim Ford
Publisher

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Cover photo: Lt. Cmdr. Mark Bair, a pilot assigned to the "Rampagers" of Strike Fighter Squadron 83, is greeted by his family during a homecoming celebration at Naval Air Station Oceana, in Virginia Beach, Va., in June last year. The squadron returned after an eight-month deployment aboard the U.S.S. Harry S. Truman. Virginia Beach is part of the Hampton Roads region, which was selected as one of the eight communities in this year's class of Great American Defense Communities. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Spc. 2nd Class Alysia Hernandez.

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ABOUT ADC

ADC builds strong communities that support America's military. It is the connection point for leaders from communities, states, the military and industry on community-military issues and installation management to enhance knowledge, information sharing and best practices. With nearly 300 communities, states, regions and affiliated industry organizations, ADC represents every major defense community and state in the nation.

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Celebrating the **Fort Leonard Wood Region** a truly Great American Defense Community



The people of the United States have long relied on Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri to train the men and women who have fought for our country in every war and conflict America has played a part in since World War II.

For over 75 years the Fort Leonard Wood Region's citizens, business owners and community leaders have proudly supported American servicemen and women, their families and veterans in the heartland of America. We remain committed to our stake in the defense of this nation through the many enduring and emerging partnerships that continue to enable the success of our men and women in uniform. We are exceptionally proud to be a Great American Defense Community!

Local cities and counties... "are the source of the American military's enduring strength, because you provide our men and women in uniform the preparation, the care and the purpose they need to defend our country."

Ash Carter, Secretary of Defense
2015 National Association of Counties Annual Conference

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AACOG congratulates the San Antonio-Alamo Region for being recognized as a 2017 Great American Defense Community and for receiving the 2017 Altus Trophy! AACOG works with Joint Base San Antonio, the Texas Veterans Commission, the San Antonio Coalition for Veterans and Families, and many other agencies throughout the region to strengthen our community through partnerships.

Current AACOG initiatives:

- Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant
 - JBSA Joint Land Use Study
- JBSA Veterans Transition to Law Enforcement
 - TVC Call-a-Ride for Vets

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U.S. Air Force photo by Sean Worrell



Courtesy City of San Antonio



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ADC is heading to San Diego for Installation Innovation Forum 2018. Make plans to join top leaders from military, communities and industry for this important event.

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FAST FACTS:

GREAT AMERICAN DEFENSE COMMUNITIES Class of 2017



The Great American Defense Communities program was launched in 2016 with support from the House and Senate Defense Communities Caucus to acknowledge the cities, counties and regions that support and nurture their installations and the quality of life for military families. Each year's class is selected by a panel of defense community advocates in Washington and across the country. The Great American Defense Communities program is supported this year by grant funding from USAA and the National Math and Science Initiative.

1 CHRISTIAN COUNTY, KY

Installation Served: Fort Campbell
Regional Population: 282,349
Service Member Population: 26,591
Military Family Population: 39,532
Support Organization: Christian County Chamber of Commerce



The chamber of commerce serves more than 900 members by connecting them with resources and people they need for solutions and problem solving. The chamber works together as a community of businesses and residents to serve as a primary connector between business interests and community interests.

2 HAMPTON ROADS, VA

Installations Served: Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Air Station Oceana, Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Coast Guard Training Center Yorktown, Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads, Camp Pendleton, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Dam Neck Annex, Armed Forces Experimental Training Activity Camp Peary, Camp Allen, Navy Auxiliary Landing Field Fentress, Craney Island Fuel Depot and Naval Support Activity Northwest Annex
Regional Population: 1,726,907
Service Member Population: 130,263
Military Family Population: 125,000
Support Organization: Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance (HRMFFA)



Created in 2006 by the Hampton Roads Mayors and Chairs Caucus, HRMFFA provides a focused regional voice in matters relating to attracting, retaining and growing Hampton Roads' many federal capabilities and installations. The organization is governed by a 24-member board of directors consisting of an elected official from each of the 13 communities in Hampton Roads and 11 private sector business leaders from a broad range of business interests. It is managed by an executive director to coordinate mission operations and provide necessary administrative oversight.

3 SIERRA VISTA, AZ

Installation Served: Fort Huachuca
Regional Population: 125,770
Service Member Population: 6,002
Military Family Population: 5,653
Support Organization: The City of Sierra Vista



Incorporated in 1956, Sierra Vista has steadily grown to encompass more than 130 square miles, including Fort Huachuca. It is the largest city in

Cochise County and serves as the region's hub for retail, education and health care.

4 ALAMO-SAN ANTONIO REGION, TX

Installation Served: Joint Base San Antonio
Regional Population: 2,429,609
Service Member Population: 60,850
Military Family Population: 64,166
Support Organization: Alamo Area Council Of Governments (AACOG)

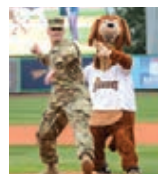


Defined as a political subdivision of the state of Texas, AACOG was established in 1967 under Chapter 391 of the Local Government

Code as a voluntary association of local governments and organizations that serves the Alamo Area/State Planning Region 18, which covers 13 counties and 12,582 square miles. Comprising the area planning region are Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Frio, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Medina, McMullen and Wilson counties. The mission of AACOG is to enhance the quality of life of all residents of the region in partnership with elected and appointed officials, funders, community partners and beneficiaries.

5 CHARLESTON REGION, SC

Installation Served: Joint Base Charleston
Regional Population: 761,155
Service Member Population: 13,296
Support Organization: The Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce



The Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce is the nation's oldest operating chamber of commerce, founded in 1773. Today the chamber

is a regional advancement and advocacy organization comprised of more than 1,600 member organizations representing 125,000 employees. Our mission is to initiate, advocate and empower our region to advance a prosperous business environment.

6 FORT HOOD-CENTRAL TEXAS REGION

Installation Served: Fort Hood
Regional Population: 435,857
Service Member Population: 35,620
Military Family Population: 48,859
Support Organization: Heart of Texas Defense Alliance (HOTDA)



HOTDA advocates for Fort Hood and the seven cities (Killeen, Harker Heights, Copperas Cove, Belton, Temple, Lampasas and Gatesville) and three

counties (Bell, Coryell and Lampasas) that surround or are significantly impacted by the presence of Fort Hood in central Texas.

7 WEST VALLEY PARTNERS, AZ

Installation Served: Luke Air Force Base
Regional Population: 4,661,537
Service Member Population: 5,330
Military Family Population: 10,045
Support Organization: West Valley Partners



West Valley Partners is a group of 14 local jurisdictions within the Phoenix metropolitan area that support and advocate for Luke Air Force Base.

8 SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Installations Served: Naval Submarine Base New London, Coast Guard Academy, Coast Guard Research & Development Center, Coast Guard Ice Patrol HQ, Coast Guard Marine Safety Lab, Coast Guard Station New London, National Guard Reservation Stones Ranch, National Guard Camp Niantic and National Guard Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group
Regional Population: 269,801
Service Member Population: 7,500
Military Family Population: 9,000
Support Organization: Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SECCOG)



SECCOG is a public agency with representatives from 22 towns, cities and boroughs formed to provide a basis for intergovernmental

cooperation in dealing with a wide range of issues facing southeastern Connecticut. The council was organized in October 1992, taking over the mission of the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, which had been in existence since January 1961. SECCOG, composed of municipal chief elected officials provides the primary mechanism for regional planning since the state of Connecticut abolished county governments decades ago.

Profiles based on information provided by communities. Regional population approximations based on U.S. Census Bureau data for metropolitan statistical areas, where applicable. Service member and military family population approximations from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Communities and Family Planning, and community-reported data.

MORE THAN A DUTY STATION, IT'S HOME

By **Andrea Downing Peck**

Frequent moves can leave military families feeling disconnected, isolated and stressed. Innovative programs in three of this year's Great American Defense Communities serve as examples of how communities can provide resources and support to ensure mission readiness and make every member of the family feel at home.



Christian County, Ky.
Hampton Roads, Va.
Southeastern Connecticut
Council of Governments

Displayed on a wall in many military families' homes is a sign that reads: "Home is where the military sends us." Yet moving to a new duty station does not mean a community instantly will feel like home. The stresses of introducing children to new school systems, rebuilding support networks or replacing a military spouse's job can make an inspirational slogan ring hollow for months after the last moving box has been discarded.

Finding ways to make a military family feel connected to a new place can be a challenge for every community with a military installation near its borders, especially since the average military family will

relocate every two to three years, moving 10 times more often than civilian families.

Results from the 2016 Military Family Lifestyle Survey conducted by Blue Star Families, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group, help to highlight the impact that military service has on families, but it also raises broader challenges facing communities.

Of the nearly 8,400 respondents, 72 percent felt that the current operations tempo "exerts an unacceptable level of stress for a healthy work/family life." Three of the top five issues reported by service members and military spouses who took the survey are related to quality of life, including the

Staff Sgt. Luke Etter, left, an aerospace propulsion technician, speaks with a family at the U.S. Air Force recruiting booth during the Air Power Over Hampton Roads air show at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., April 24, 2016. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Christopher Boitz.



impact of deployment on children, family stability and operational tempo.

Amy Jerome, senior director of community development and programs for Blue Star Families, said that one of the statistics from the survey that stands out the most is that 88 percent of those surveyed feel the general public does not understand the sacrifices made by service members and their families on a daily basis. For Jerome, that statistic represents an opportunity for defense communities.

“That’s a powerful number,” she said. “Communities need to find ways to build greater awareness. It’s not that our civilian

counterparts don’t want to support their military-family neighbors; it’s more likely that they don’t know how. We need to help break through the feeling of isolation that can happen when families move from duty station to duty station.”

Jerome, who also is a military spouse, speaks from experience.

“We have three kids, and I have endured a series of deployments over the last 20 years,” Jerome said. “So I know what it’s like to start from scratch someplace new, and I know that sometimes the hardest thing for my civilian neighbors to do was to just knock on the door and say hello

because they’re afraid they might not have anything in common or maybe they assumed that we already have a network. In the end, that’s seldom the case. We’re trying to encourage more interactions where we’re bringing military families together with the greater community.”

Three of this year’s Great American Defense Communities are doing just that—finding ways to make military families feel connected.

In Christian County, Ky., the Chamber of Commerce’s Military Spouse Leadership Program is breaking the bubble of isolation and connecting spouses and



Participants in the Christian County Chamber of Commerce Military Spouse Leadership Program—along with handheld mascots of famous local historic figures—pose for selfies during a scavenger hunt across Hopkinsville, Ky. Photos provided by the Christian County Chamber of Commerce.





families to the place they call home. Southeastern Connecticut's Military Superintendent Liaison Committee serves as a model for how a longstanding partnership between a base and community can address challenges facing military-connected children and their families, while school districts within the Hampton Roads area of Virginia are using a host of programs and strategies at all levels to help military-connected students transition into new schools.

Breaking Out of the Bubble

"I always had one foot out the door ready to leave."

Like many military spouses, Angela Cantrell was always prepared, somewhere in the back of her mind, to make the move to the next post, fully understanding that transience is part of the job description for most active-duty military and their families.

As a service member and a military spouse, Cantrell said she viewed duty stations as temporary addresses, convinced she wouldn't be in one place long enough to make a difference.

As her husband approached his 10th year at Fort Campbell, Cantrell realized that after nearly a decade of living in a town near the fifth-largest Army base in the United States, she knew little about the defense community she called home—Hopkinsville, Ky. When she arrived in the community in 2007, Cantrell quickly slipped into a routine first defined by toddler-friendly activities and then by her own job with the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, always assuming another move was around the corner. It was the "bubble"—the day-in, day-out routine and the continual expectation that her time in this duty station was fleeting.

The bubble began to break in 2016 when she found herself part of a unique program—the Christian County Chamber of Commerce's Military Spouse Leadership Program (MSLP). While only three days long, it was an experience that gave her

and many other families who shared that feeling of isolation a "new sense of community" that helped her get beyond the daily routine.

"Looking back, if I would have jumped in with both feet, I would have appreciated prior duty stations more and could have been more involved," said Cantrell, an Army veteran. "The MSLP opened so many doors that I didn't know existed. It highlighted so many local businesses and community activities."

Katie Lopez, director of military affairs for the Christian County Chamber, recognized the challenge of the bubble and created the MSLP in 2015 as a way to provide spouses with a military lifestyle-friendly version of the chamber's civilian leadership course, which meant condensing a nine-month commitment into an action-packed three-day event and eliminating enrollment fees.

Lopez, an Army spouse herself, knows firsthand the importance of connecting military spouses to the civilian community. After moving to Christian County in 2013, Lopez spent 473 days unemployed, a stretch she blames, in part, on having to start from scratch to build a professional network.

"We wanted to develop this program so spouses could start building connections," Lopez said.

MSLP participants gain insights on how Christian County functions as a community—politically, socially, economically and culturally. Spouses eat lunch with the mayor and other city officials, tour local nonprofit organizations, learn about school programs that support military children, and visit landmark local and veteran-owned businesses. The course culminates with a recognition ceremony at the Military Affairs Committee's gala Eagle Ambassador Breakfast.

Since graduating from the MSLP, Cantrell and her family have participated in community service projects, supported veteran-owned businesses and found other ways to bond with Hopkinsville. Cantrell also took part in Citizens for Fort Campbell's annual Chamber of Commerce-sponsored lobbying trip

to Washington, D.C., and she recently completed the Christian County Sheriff's Office Citizens Academy.

Cantrell said the spouses in the leadership program "all wanted to be involved. We just didn't know how and where to go."

Her newly ignited enthusiasm for the area has rubbed off on her entire family, who now are united in their plan to remain in Hopkinsville when her husband, Phillip, retires from active duty.

She said that for military families to get the most out of their time in communities—whether they're there for 10 months or 10 years—they need to approach each posting proactively, with open and eager minds.

"You have to be open to opportunities and be looking for them," Cantrell said. "You have to be willing to get invested. If you are going to stay in Hopkinsville/Christian County permanently, you want to be invested. But even if you don't plan on staying, find a way to get invested in your community and make it better. If you don't like it, make it better. If you like it, sustain it."

Always the New Kid

The first day of school can be a nerve-racking experience. Getting used to teachers, meeting classmates, trying to make friends, and understanding the ins and outs of a new school's routine and culture can be fraught with as many obstacles as opportunities. This is made even more challenging when you're new to an area. And what happens when you go through the process every few years between elementary school and high school?

As the child of military parents and having moved eight times during her childhood, Odyssey Switakowski understands the perils of being the new kid in school. She again experienced the new-school blues at the start of her freshman year when she moved from New Jersey to Green Run High School in Virginia Beach, Va.

"It definitely makes a difference academically if you don't have a lot of friends, because you feel like the oddball



Elementary school students watch as sailors from resident commands on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story (JEBLCFS) and other Hampton Roads-area bases raise colors Oct. 13, 2016, to celebrate the U.S. Navy's 241st birthday, as part of Fleet Week Hampton Roads. Photo by JEBLCFS Public Affairs Office.



out,” the 17-year-old explained. “You are more stressed about finding friends and trying to fit in, so you don’t necessarily focus on your grades.”

Children in military families know this scenario all too well. In addition to coping with a new socially charged school environment, they frequently are doing so with a parent deployed, which can leave support at home more strained. According to the Blue Star Families’ survey, 51 percent of respondents said that U.S. Department of Defense services are inadequate to support military children in coping with deployments. That’s where support from actively engaged community organizations makes the difference.

Communities across the Hampton Roads region have recognized that to be successful, this support has to be built at various levels—from peer interactions to specially trained staff like guidance counselors and an entire school system focused on making sure every “new kid” succeeds.

When Switakowski arrived at Green Run, she turned her experience into action. Having heard about a program called Student 2 Student (S2S) at previous deployments, she approached school officials about starting a local chapter of S2S, ensuring that future students at Green Run would more quickly feel at home. S2S is an initiative of the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), a Harker Heights, Texas-based nonprofit founded in 1998 that works at the national level to ensure quality educational opportunities for military-connected children.

“School administrators definitely fell in love with the idea, and they wanted to start it up as soon as possible,” Switakowski said. “We went to my guidance counselor and she helped us start it.”

Because the community is home to so many military installations and the military families that support them, similar groups have taken root in a number of schools throughout the Hampton Roads area. At all grade levels, the program encourages students to take leadership roles in welcoming newcomers and helping

them learn their new school’s academic, social and cultural norms.

MCEC Student Programs Manager Debra Longley said civilian and military students come together to play an important part in a club’s success.

“The military kids can empathize,” Longley said. “They know what it is like to move and unpack everything in a new room. They know how it feels to leave your best friend behind. The civilian kids know where the best hamburger place is, what movie theaters to avoid, what makes you fit in and what makes you stand out like a sore thumb. They know the local culture.”

S2S is just one of the programs offered by schools in Hampton Roads to help military-connected kids feel at home. While many programs focus on peer connections, many provide counseling and support for students and families, special training for military parents and teachers with military-connected students, and academic programs and projects designed to meet the unique needs of children in military households.

Guidance counselors attuned to military students’ needs are a staple at many area schools. They not only provide an understanding of issues brought about by

frequent moves and deployments, but also an in-depth knowledge of resources such as the Military Interstate Compact on Education, which ensures military children transferring between school districts and states are not stymied by different enrollment, eligibility and graduation requirements.






Navy veteran Amanda Yoder knew she had found her dream job when she was hired as a military-connected school counselor for Virginia Beach Public Schools (VBPS), a position focused on the “social and emotional needs” of military students.

“There could not be a job description more fitting for what I love,” said Yoder, who has been with VBPS since 2013. While her position originally was funded by a federal grant, it now is locally funded, Yoder pointed out.

Yoder said some of her most important work is with high school students who often need their records “pieced together” to make certain they are on track for graduation after transferring from schools with different standards.

The special challenges military children face is one reason Norfolk Public Schools created the Department of Interagency Collaboration and Wraparound Services,

FIVE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR DEFENSE COMMUNITY A GREAT “HOME”

-  **1** Recognize that military families may not seek help, so design programs that “break the bubble” and bring the community to them.
-  **2** Take advantage of national models like MCEC’s S2S to build quick success. Good ideas don’t always involve starting from scratch.
-  **3** One program does not make a great educational system. Think about every level—student, staff and system.
-  **4** Start with a strong foundation that includes a way for community and military leaders to gather, share information and solve problems.
-  **5** Never forget that our military readiness depends on our military families having a great place to call home.

according to Executive Director Sharon Byrdsong, who credits the new superintendent, Melinda Boone, with prioritizing the needs of military families. The department strives to develop strong working relationships with families and community partners to support students' academic progress, as well as their social, emotional and health needs.

Byrdsong said the district is discussing ways to expand its partnerships with local military bases. One possibility is a mentorship program with military spouses.

"We are extremely privileged and proud to serve the children whose parents serve our country every day," Byrdsong said. "We also recognize that these children have

very unique needs that we are obligated to address as a school division."

While Hampton Roads is home to the largest naval base in the world and one of the largest concentrations of military families in the country, it doesn't always mean there is a big budget for educational programs. This is echoed by

SETTLING DOWN AND SERVING HOPS



"Starbucks, but with beer" is how Hopkinsville Brewing Company co-founder Kate Irving describes the atmosphere at her family's craft beer brewery located in a renovated 1940s-era building in the heart of downtown Hopkinsville, Ky.

"We wanted it to be a place where people would want to come hang out and get to know their friends and neighbors," said Irving, who opened the brewery in September 2016 with her husband Steve, an active-duty officer stationed at nearby Fort Campbell.

Kate first was introduced to the Fort Campbell area as an active-duty soldier in 2005 and jokes that she decided to live in Hopkinsville then because "she

Kate Irving opened the Hopkinsville Brewing Company with her husband, Steve, in 2016, more than a decade after she first was stationed at Fort Campbell. Photos provided by Kate Irving.



wanted to go home at night and pretend she wasn't in the Army."

When Steve was re-assigned to Fort Campbell in 2015, the family decided to put down roots in Hopkinsville.

"The people here are so nice," she explained. "This is the only place I have ever lived where people will come up and hug you in the grocery store."

Kate believes the Christian County Chamber of Commerce and Hopkinsville also have stepped up their game, providing more family-friendly activities and offering more support to soldiers and transitioning veterans as well as retirees.

"They do a really good job of figuring out what would benefit everyone who has ties to the military."

Almost all of the Irvings' employees have ties to the military, which makes speaking in three-letter acronyms a preferred method of communication and helps make soldiers feel at home—as does the military discount. The business also is cementing its ties to the community at large by contributing a portion of its profits each month to a local nonprofit organization.

While the Irvings had no ties to Kentucky before being stationed at Fort Campbell, Kate said Hopkinsville is now home.

"We've moved all over the country, but we love the Fort Campbell area," she said. "We love Kentucky. We always asked to come back here." —ADP





Monica Esqueda, an education professor at nearby Old Dominion University.

“Part of what is going to be successful comes with knowing your community and knowing what the families are looking for,” Esqueda said. “‘High-quality and impactful’ doesn’t always mean it costs a lot of money.”

From students, staff and the entire education system across the Hampton Roads region, there is a commitment to make sure students don’t always feel like the “new kid,” and that’s what makes this one of the great places for our military to call home.

A Strong Foundation of Support

When a fourth-grader entered his classroom visibly sad at the start of the year, Mary Morrisson Elementary School teacher Brett Merrill knew better than to chalk up the little girl’s demeanor to the after-effects of a squabble with a friend or sibling.

The 10-year-old was missing her father, a Navy sailor who was deployed.

As a new teacher in Groton, Conn., Merrill said he might not have come to the right determination had he not been through the Groton School District’s “Navy 101” training. The information boot camp, presented annually by Naval Submarine Base (NSB) New London’s executive officer during teacher orientation explains the deployment cycle, command structure, lingo and other facets of military life to new staff.

“It gives you the feeling of being more prepared,” said Merrill, who previously taught on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. “The more information you have about your student population, the more success you will have with them.”

When the girl told Merrill she would like to talk to a counselor, he was able to map out times for the pair to meet throughout the school year.

“Without the training, the outcome might have been different,” Merrill said.

Navy 101 arms teachers with the right training so they can help students overcome challenges related to the military lifestyle. The program’s roots can be traced to Southeastern Connecticut’s Military Superintendent Liaison Committee (MSLC), a nationally recognized partnership of regional school districts and military installations that call the area home, including NSB New London, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Coast Guard Station New London and the Connecticut National Guard.

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Virginia Beach Middle School BRATS Club Sponsor Christy McAnally, fourth from left, poses with club members at a “Clean the Bay Day” event where they helped pick up trash along a creek. McAnally said her biggest memory of the day is from when they got back to the school: “As soon as we got off the bus, a student’s mom was calling for him to take a call. It was his dad calling from Iraq. How cool is that!” Photo provided by Christy McAnally.

PROUD TO BE A BRAT

Some people might not consider being called “Brat Lady” a compliment, but when Virginia Beach Middle School teacher Christy McAnally first heard her nickname, she knew she was making a difference in the lives of the military-connected students at her school.

McAnally, the daughter of a Marine F-4 Phantom pilot in Vietnam, formed the first BRATS Club for children of current and former active duty and reserve service members in 2010 while at Landstown Middle School in Virginia Beach.

The genesis for bringing together students who share the unique military lifestyle originated two years earlier out of a chance get-together with filmmaker Donna Musil after a local screening of Musil’s documentary film “BRATS: Our Journey Home.” Musil suggested McAnally was in a perfect position as a military brat and teacher to launch such a club.

“With all that was going on in Iraq and Afghanistan at that time, I noticed there were kids in my classroom that were seated next to each other,” McAnally said. “Both had parents deployed, but they didn’t know that about each other.”

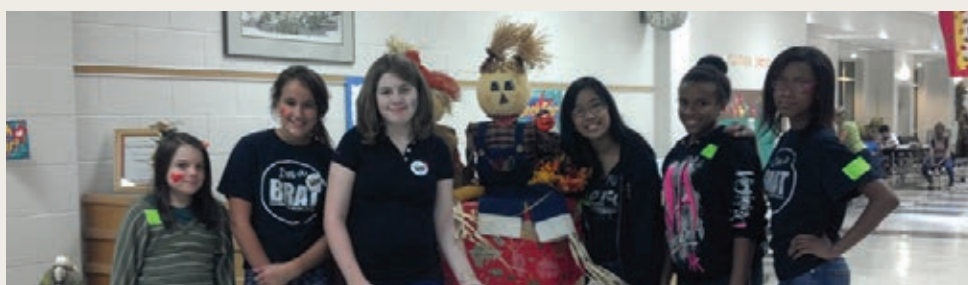
McAnally now serves as director of BRATS Clubs for the nonprofit organization Brats Without Borders. Twice-monthly club meetings give military students an opportunity to share their experiences and fears with fellow students who can relate firsthand to what they are going through, from

preparing for another permanent change of station move to coping with a deployed parent. They also participate in community service projects and social events outside of school.

“There’s a need for military kids to be with other military kids that are experiencing the same types of experiences—the multiple moves, being the new kid and not having someone to sit with at lunch, being ahead [academically] of where your new school is or behind at your new school,” said McAnally, who as a child attended 13 schools in five states and Italy. “It’s more of a support group than anything else.”

When a Navy helicopter crashed off the Virginia coast in 2014, McAnally met with a Landstown Middle School family whose father died in the crash. McAnally had taught the family’s older son, and the younger son was a BRATS Club member. McAnally said the youngest boy greeted her with a hug and then asked, “When are we going to have a BRATS Club meeting?”

BRATS Club students from Virginia Beach Middle School volunteer at the New Castle Elementary School Fall Festival. Club members managed games, helped with concessions and face painting. Photo provided by Christy McAnally.



McAnally knew at that moment the value of the club was profound.

“He needed his people,” she said. “He needed his group that would understand the chance of these types of tragedies occurring.”

During a two-year hiatus from the classroom to serve as coordinator of the division’s Military Connected and Academic Support Program, McAnally introduced BRATS Clubs to Birdneck and Hermitage elementary schools and Corporate Landing Middle School. Now teaching again, McAnally has been reunited with students from her elementary school clubs who were happy to see the “Brats Lady” in the Virginia Beach Middle School hallway, knowing they soon would be getting a BRATS Club.

“In this day and time, the need is great for them to find each other and have that bond of a shared experience,” McAnally said. “When things are good, they share it, and when they are going through something difficult, they have a soft place to land with the BRATS Club for support.” —ADP



« Continued from page 21

“What immediately became clear to me is when military families get orders to this area, there is an instant connection that has been fostered through the MSLC,” said Groton Public Schools Superintendent Michael Graner, who taught at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London while serving in the Coast Guard and led Ledyard Public Schools prior to taking Groton’s top post.

The MSLC offers a seat at the table to superintendents in all eight districts in Southeastern Connecticut as well as Navy, Coast Guard and National Guard leadership, high school principals, community members and a representative of the MCEC. While not all superintendents attend every monthly meeting during the school year, a core group participates regularly. An annual breakfast meeting at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy’s Officers’ Club honors military volunteers and military spouses for work in the local schools.

Because there is a direct tie between a military family’s happiness and a service member’s ability to successfully perform his or her duties, the MSLC plays a vital role in the military community.

“People cannot focus on the mission if they are concerned about how their kids are doing at home, whether they’re fitting in at school, whether they’re getting an adequate education. If they are a special-needs family, are they getting the services they need?” NSB New London School Liaison Officer Miranda Chapman said. “Having that welcoming, supportive school is very important because the service member needs not to be distracted from what they need to do.”

Former Charles Barnum Elementary School Principal Valerie Nelson, a longtime MSLC participant, said the committee highlighted the importance of having programs in place to ease the transition process for military families.

“As a community, we realized there needed to be some consistency for students transferring in to help them not only make the academic transition but the social transition, too,” Nelson said. “We do a lot to make sure the student feels



Sixth-graders from the Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication in New London watch as Lt. Charles Clark demonstrates a prototype for a personally worn hazardous atmosphere detection kit developed at the Coast Guard Research and Development Center. The students and about 100 of their classmates toured the facility Nov. 10, 2016, during a STEM program. U.S. Coast Guard photo provided by Lt. Charles Clark.

comfortable, feels welcome and feels a part of the school community from day one. This is true for parents, too.”

Graner said his own military experience taught him that a school district often is “90 percent of the connection” a military family has to a community.

“Many committee members are former military, as are many of the educators, so it has been a foundation for making sure the schools are relevant to the families and meeting their needs,” he said.

The MSLC was formed in 1995 in an effort to reverse state policies that did not allow school districts to accept school physical record forms from military health care providers. But Mystic, Conn., resident Kathleen O’Beirne, member emeritus of the MCEC and longtime MSLC member, traces the committee’s origins to an “awakening” in the community at the start of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. As then-deputy director of the Navy Family Services Center, O’Beirne joined forces with the school superintendent and base officials to provide parents with

A VOLUNTEER 'AMBASSADOR' TO THE COMMUNITY

An active-duty sailor with a demanding job and three school-age children at home, Logistics Specialist First Class Korilyn Barrett might seem an unlikely candidate to be volunteering in the Groton School District in Connecticut, especially at a school none of her children attend.

However, Barrett knows firsthand it "takes a village" to raise children as a single mother so her dedication to Claude Chester Elementary School is an opportunity to give back at a school traditionally short on volunteers.

"I believe there is always time for volunteer work," Barrett said. "I like to involve myself and my sailors in programs that have to do with children, because they will be the foundation of our country. You start teaching them the important things like being role models and leaders, making good decisions and caring about one other."

Barrett, who has served at six different duty stations over her Navy career, first was stationed at Naval Submarine Base New London in 2007. A decade ago, with

three children under the age of three, Barrett "didn't really get out much. I was at home and at work."

Today, Barrett serves as leading petty officer at Naval Supply Systems Command Fleet Logistics Center Norfolk, New London, a tenant command of the submarine base. Having children active in the community and holding a leadership position within her command has allowed Barrett to "understand the impact the teamwork between the military and civilian sector" has on the region.

"I remind my sailors that when you put on this uniform, you are not just a sailor during the day," Barrett said. "You are a role model and a leader 24/7. You signed up to be an ambassador for the United States. The way you do that is you reach out into your community and you give back to your community."

A chance conversation while volunteering with her sailors at a youth football game in Groton led to Barrett's two-year partnership with Claude

Chester Elementary, where sailors have coordinated playground activities as well as assisted during assemblies and field day. This year, the sailors launched "Wake Up with the Navy," a before-school physical fitness program for students held every other Friday.

Principal Jamie Giordano credits service members with helping teach students social and problem-solving skills as well as being "optimistic, positive, just wonderful role models."

"It is outstanding when they come because the kids get excited to see them," Giordano said, noting students routinely ask when the "Navy" will be on campus. "We are so appreciative."

Barrett insists volunteering pays off for everyone involved.

"As much as we give to these kids, we get so much more," she said. "When you see their faces light up when you walk on the playground or give them a high-five in the hallway, that is what is most rewarding." —ADP

assurances that students would be safe from wartime threats.

"That was really the impetus for formation, as time went on, of the MSLC," she recalls.


O'Beirne said the MSLC's local legacy is a record of "wise decision-making" by educators and the military. In addition to planting the seed for the Navy 101 program, the MSLC has fostered partnerships between military installations and individual schools, spearheaded changes to the magnet school lottery system to ensure transitioning military students could apply, helped ensure students displaced by Navy housing privatization

remained at their original schools while continuing to provide a blueprint for best practices when serving a mobile military student population.

"The MSLC has been a great venue for disseminating accurate information," Chapman said. "It starts with the superintendents, but then information is able to get to the people working one-on-one with our military families."

While the MSLC has laid the groundwork for strengthening the partnership between Southeastern Connecticut's military installations and its school districts, it creates an environment where everyone is

focused on making military students feel at home in their classrooms.

"Our teachers do a phenomenal job," said Mary Morrisson Elementary School Principal Monica Franzone, noting that staff members recognize the personal sacrifice service members and their families make on behalf of their country. "It is not new to our teachers to have students coming and going frequently. They will find them a buddy, somebody to show them the ropes. New students are welcomed and assimilated rather quickly because of the [always-changing population] we live with here." 

NATIONAL MATH + SCIENCE INITIATIVE

HELPING STUDENTS AIM HIGH

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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FUEL GREAT COMMUNITIES AND A STRONG MILITARY

By Willona M. Sloan



Charleston Region, S.C.
Fort Hood-Central Texas Region
Sierra Vista, Ariz.

Like many, those who serve want to make sure they and their families can be successful—and college is a big part of that. Whether it is making sure kids are ready for college, paying for it or getting the right degree to succeed after military service, educational opportunity is important to everyone.

It often is a factor in a family's decision to accept a duty station, or even depart military service. It is a big issue with a stealth impact on military readiness and an important issue for defense communities across the country. While many communities have different approaches to ensuring educational success for their military children and families, three of this year's Great American Defense Communities have innovative ideas for how to make it happen.



The National Math and Science Initiative offers innovative programs to increase access and participation in Advanced Placement high school classes.

Tougher Classes Creating Positive Places to Explore the Future

Joint Base Charleston (S.C.) leadership has worked with local school districts to expand educational opportunities for military-connected students. One such program provides additional rigor with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education that can prepare students for success in college and careers. The National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) offers an innovative set of supports to increase access and participation in Advanced Placement (AP) high school classes.

“The National Math and Science Initiative is another step in Joint Base Charleston’s effort toward creating a positive and strong learning environment for all children, including our military children, in the Charleston tri-county area,” said Chris Gerry, School Liaison Officer, 628th Force Support Squadron.

By fall 2017, NMSI’s College Readiness Program for Military Families will have been implemented in 215 military-connected high schools across 30 states, serving 89 installations.

“We were deployed to locations that were either considered really high-density or very high-need,” said Marcus Lingenfelter, senior vice president for advancement at NMSI.

NMSI programming for military-connected schools originally was funded by grants from the Department of Defense Education Activity, Office of Naval Research and Army Education Opportunity Program, and most recently by Department of Defense STEM via the Air Force Academy Foundation. Private sector mission partners such as Northrop Grumman, The Boeing Company and BAE Systems, also have been invaluable by generously providing necessary matching funds. Such is the case with Joint Base Charleston and a \$1.4 million gift from Boeing.

NMSI provides overall capacity building interventions including educator

professional development, student instructional supports and achievement-based financial awards to five schools in three different local county systems near Joint Base Charleston: Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester.

Given its proximity to Joint Base Charleston, Fort Dorchester High School’s student body is very diverse. However, Principal Bert Postell noted that the school’s AP program wasn’t as inclusive or as strong as he would have liked.

“We were at a stage in the development of our Advanced Placement courses where we were trying to move from AP being for the elite group in the school and only certain students got to take these classes,” Postell said.

To build instructional capacity, every AP teacher participates in summer NMSI training and two follow-up trainings during the school year. Students can participate in Saturday study sessions, when NMSI brings in subject matter experts to lead seminars.

After the first year, Fort Dorchester High School had a 157 percent increase in the number of students achieving a qualifying score on a math or science AP exam; for female students the increase was 185 percent and for minority students it was 125 percent. The initiative has a three-year implementation.

“NMSI has helped us grow our AP program,” Postell said. “Just on numbers of students enrolled, we went from a little over 400 students in AP classes to last year, our first year in the NMSI program, where we gave more than 675 AP exams. We grew by about 200 students. This year, we’re giving over 800 AP exams. Next year’s enrollment in the same courses is up to about 1,000 students.”

Fort Dorchester senior Jackson Trigiani has taken six AP classes through the program.

“Having that access has been beneficial to me, because AP classes have given me better college preparation. I have multiple college credits and I know that I can handle a tough course,” he said. “I am

two credits away from being a sophomore in college, and I haven’t even left my hometown. This is great, because I have time to explore and figure out things I would like to do in my future.”

Trigiani’s mother is a teacher at the high school, and his father, who is in the Army National Guard, has been deployed several times to Afghanistan. His most recent deployment was for one year as the commander of the South Carolina Army National Guard’s 251st Area Support Medical Company.

The 18-year-old says his teachers have created a positive environment for students.

“My teachers have encouraged me to think for myself and to ask questions,” he said. “One way my engineering teacher, Mr. Bertolet, does it to get us involved in the classroom. He makes participating fun by giving each student a task. The best classes let us learn who we are and how we think and respond to situations in an environment that makes it okay to make mistakes.”

What’s next for the senior? College. “I’m heading to University of South Carolina to study biomedical engineering.”

Preparing students for college and career success is the goal of the program, Postell said.

“We want our students to leave us college or career-ready, whichever is their chosen path. NMSI did a study of college freshmen, a student who has had an AP English and math course in high school, who did not pass the exam, still has a 0.5 higher GPA in college than the student who didn’t take the course,” Postell said.

And it’s not just students in the AP classes who benefit. Since all of Fort Dorchester’s educators teach AP and non-AP classes, through their professional development with NMSI, teachers have enhanced rigor and quality in instruction for all the school’s students.

For the families connected to Joint Base Charleston, the educational program is a great benefit of being in the area.



“The best classes let us learn who we are and how we think.”

—Jackson Trigiano, 18, Fort Dorchester High School, North Charleston, S.C.

“Any program that improves school performance and academic achievement, such as the NMSI program, benefits military students,” Gerry said. “NMSI has increased collaboration between all of the participating schools, crossing district lines and attendance boundaries. Teachers are working together to improve instruction. This can only improve the quality in the educational systems our military children attend.”

Best of all, children feel excited to learn.

“In speaking with our local educators, they are seeing an improved desire by their students to achieve and be successful,” Gerry said. “Our educators are also seeing students who previously were intimidated by passing a placement class now rise to the challenge.”

Editor’s Note: The National Math and Science Initiative is a sponsor of the 2017 Great American Defense Communities program.

Creating the Most Military-Friendly College in the Nation

As John Somers prepared to leave the Army after 20 years, he started to realize he didn’t know what to do next.

“I had been a military police officer, but going into law enforcement at the age of 40 really wasn’t going to work,” Somers said. “It was something that I physically didn’t have the ability to do. I had a ton of college credit, but I didn’t realize that college credits don’t equate to a degree. I didn’t know any of this.”

Fortunately, Somers was near Cochise College in Sierra Vista, Ariz., which has served the military community stationed at Fort Huachuca since it opened in the 1960s. The college has been named by *GI Jobs Magazine* and *Victory Media* as a top military-friendly school

because of its military-focused services and academic programs.

Many soldiers receive extensive training at Fort Huachuca, which supports three of the Department of Defense’s fastest-growing missions: unmanned aircraft systems training and operations, military intelligence, and cybersecurity. Through a unique partnership with Cochise College, soldiers can earn college credit for successful completion of this training, while also working toward an associate’s degree.

The college awards credits based on soldiers’ military occupation specialties (MOS) training experience. Students earn a grade point average and credit for each of their training courses, which they can apply toward a 64-credit associate degree of applied science. The college recognizes learning gained from specialized training and military



Cochise College culinary student and service veteran John Tedford, right, works to improve a chicken fajita MRE at the first-ever Great American MRE Makeover, April 21, 2017, in Sierra Vista, Ariz., as Assistant City Manager Mary Jacobs and U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler Glab watch. Tedford and his fellow Cochise College chefs beat teams from the city of Sierra Vista and Buena High School at the event organized by the city in recognition of its being named a 2017 Great American Defense Community. Glab, recently honored as Fort Huachuca Sailor of the Year, was one of the judges. Photo provided by the city of Sierra Vista.



Since it opened in 1964, Cochise College in Sierra Vista, Ariz., has served the military community stationed at Fort Huachuca. Today, the student population is around 11,500.



An HH-60G Pave Hawk from the 55th Rescue Squadron orbits Fort Huachuca during an exercise on Dec 8, 2016. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Chris Drzazgowski.

experience in electronics technology, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operator and UAV technician programs. Cochise College is the first college or university in the nation to offer an MOS credentialing program.

“Over the last two years we’ve had over 1,800 student soldiers graduate from Cochise College with an associate of applied science degree. We are extremely proud of that,” James Dale “J.D.” Rottweiler, president of Cochise College, said.

The partnership with Fort Huachuca opens up opportunities for the college to help more soldiers even after they leave the installation.

“We have geared specific academic programs and career opportunities for soldiers to really begin their academic training while stationed at Fort Huachuca or some other location that is specific to those MOS and then we work to create completion programs so that student soldiers can complete their degrees wherever they might be stationed,” Rottweiler said.

Cochise College works closely with Fort Huachuca’s command leaders to build and refine its academic programs to meet soldiers’ needs.

“We work to make sure our curriculum aligns and that we’re doing things in partnership so that soldiers are getting their state-of-the-art training through the United States Army, the college is responding quickly to ensure that we’re implementing that training directly into our degree,” Rottweiler said.

Somers—the Army veteran who was unsure what to do when he was leaving the service—recalls what happened next for him.

“I spoke to an advisor who showed me how to get my military training evaluated, and I was put into a degree plan,” Somers said. “They sent the degree plan to the military and they approved it. I was able to take classes at Cochise College. As I was completing my associate’s degree, I was able to walk to Wayland Baptist University, enroll in the bachelor’s program, and graduate from there. All the classes were available right here on Fort Huachuca.”

The advisor who got him on track worked in the Office of Extended Learning. Somers is now the director of that office.

Founded in 2003, the MOS credentialing program was started by a dean who was in the military himself and had been frustrated by how difficult it often was to receive credit for military training. Somers noted that for soldiers whose experience includes working with classified information they often leave service with little experience they can share on a resume. The MOS program helps to translate those achievements.



“In this community, a lot of the training is classified so the soldiers are never able to articulate what they were trained on. They leave the military and they’re not able to say, ‘I did this,’” Somers said. “Instead of going into the details of the information they were taught, we cover the methodology. Then we are able to award them a letter grade so they can actually get a GPA that they can take with them.”

The college’s on-post services are run out of the Education Center with a small staff. For deployed soldiers, Cochise College’s Virtual Campus allows them to continue their education and earn an associate’s degree online.

“In the Education Center at Fort Huachuca, we have academic advisors, we have counselors, and we’re able to take any soldier who comes into the Ed Center and really address their needs depending on where they want to go—whether it’s a more traditional tuition-assistance program or they are a permanent party stationed on Fort Huachuca and they want to continue a degree in something that may not be MOS-specific. We have all the resources there to handle that,” Rottweiler said.

“Last year we had 630 students graduate with an associate’s degree in applied science in intelligence operations,” he said. “Those are graduates who were probably stationed at Fort Huachuca for their schoolhouse a year ago, two years ago, maybe even three years ago. [They] received credit for the training that that they received at Fort Huachuca at the time they were receiving it and then have chosen to complete their associate’s degree and the other requirements either onsite or most likely through our fairly substantial virtual online campus that we set up so the soldiers can complete wherever they may be stationed.”

Redefining College Access and Affordability in Central Texas

Is it possible to earn a college degree for less than \$20,000 these days? For many military-connected students in Central Texas, the answer is yes.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jonathan Schultz hugs his daughter, Johanna, after a redeployment ceremony on June 24, 2016, on Cooper Field at Fort Hood, Texas. U.S. Army photo by Spc. DeMarco Wills.

Educators in the region have joined together in an innovative collaboration that provides access to quality public school programs, while also making higher education more convenient and affordable. This is no small achievement given the size of Fort Hood, the Army base in Killeen. With more than 214,000 acres, Fort Hood is the largest military base in the world by area, and the most populous U.S. military installation.

To meet the needs of such a large military population, Killeen Independent School District (KISD) has designed forward-thinking programs that engage and challenge students and prepare them for success in college and careers. The local community college, Central Texas College (CTC), and university, Texas A&M–Central Texas (TAMUCT), have aligned their programs to make it easier for active-duty soldiers, veterans and spouses to work toward an associate’s, bachelor’s or master’s degree for less than \$20,000 in many cases. Together, this is making the region a desirable place for the military before and after service.

“This collaboration was a result of a need to create educational opportunities in the

community closer to Fort Hood so that soldiers and their families could access them,” said John Crutchfield, Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce president and CEO. “What we’ve developed here is a model that pushes more kids through to successful completion at a much lower cost than is seen anywhere else around the state.”

As early as high school, students can start earning college credit. All of KISD’s high schools offer access to dual-credit classes, where students can earn college credits through CTC. Earning credits early offers a free way for students to start their higher education journey and learn how to handle the rigor of college-level coursework. These credits can be transferred to all of the Texas state universities and many public universities outside of the state as well. After high school, students easily can enroll at CTC. After earning an associate’s degree, they then can enroll at TAMUCT to finish their bachelor’s degree.

Overall, for a student who earns college credit during high school, an associate’s degree at CTC and a bachelor’s degree at TAMUCT, the cost is significantly lower than following the traditional high



PREPARED AT EVERY LEVEL

Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, offers a number of educational services to help active-duty personnel and their families. At Fort Hood's Education Center, located within the Soldier Development Center on base, school liaison officers help to coordinate access to available educational opportunities. The officers coordinate school support services at the installation, work with parents to ensure seamless school transition, and facilitate access to home-school resources, as well. They also support school and community partnerships that serve military-connected families.

Efforts to support the local school systems include the Adopt-A-School program that has every school in the region linked directly to a battalion level or higher organization on Fort Hood for community support and relationship building.

Central Texas College and Texas A&M—Central Texas work very closely with Fort Hood's Education Center to ensure they are providing any and all needed educational opportunities for the soldiers and their spouses, including offering on-post classes for soldiers and spouses. They also ensure that the College Credit for Heroes program is fully implemented to give soldiers credit for their training and experience. —WS

school to four-year university path. That's because TAMUCT was designed to work in partnership with CTC.

"Our approach starts by looking at three-year-olds through to the attainment of a master's degree or post-baccalaureate degree. What has come of the collaborative effort has been amazing opportunities for students. Working closely with CTC and Texas A&M—Central Texas, we have developed a degree plan that would allow students to attain a bachelor of science degree for around \$15,000–\$16,000, which is pretty phenomenal when you start looking at tuition fees across our state and around the nation," said John Craft, superintendent of KISD.

KISD students also can join the lottery for a coveted spot in the new Early College High School. This is the second year for the school, and demand and enthusiasm have been off the charts, according to KISD officials.

Early College students can earn a high school diploma and a 60-credit associate's degree during their four years. As freshmen, students focus on high school curricula courses. As sophomores, they take nine hours of college-level courses during the year. These classes are taught by CTC faculty and include speech, art and fine arts. KISD funds the entire program, including tuition at CTC, books and related fees.

Next year, the juniors will take their high school courses as well as 12 semester hours, each semester, of CTC courses. Junior and senior students will be housed on the CTC campus in a new building dedicated to retired Army Gen. Robert M. Shoemaker, who has been a champion for quality education in Central Texas.

"The benefit to the military and the military students is that if they go through this program and graduate with a high school diploma, they will also have two years of college behind them and they will have an associate's degree at no cost to them or their families. That's a huge benefit to military families, or any family really," said Jim Yeonopolus, chancellor of CTC.

So far, the early results are good. According to data cited by program officials, to date,

those attending the Early College High School program have scored much higher in standard testing when compared to their peers. What's also noteworthy, is that 75 percent of those in the program are the first in their families to attend college."

Just as the partnership among KISD, CTC, and TAMUCT provides opportunities to young students, it also helps active duty soldiers, veterans and military spouses by making the pathway from an associate's degree to a bachelor's degree seamless.

Andreina Reyes-Tome earned an associate's degree at CTC, and she now is a student at TAMUCT, where she is majoring in criminal justice and minoring in military science. Reyes-Tome is a veteran, having served in the Army for four-and-a-half years.

"Texas A&M has helped me in the transition. They really do take care of the veteran community and active duty community," said Reyes-Tome.

At TAMUCT, she is a contracted ROTC cadet. She also does work/study at the university's Ted and Diane Connell Military and Veteran Service Center, where she has the opportunity to assist fellow veterans in acclimating to the university community. She feels that because many of the faculty members and staff have prior military experience they understand the needs of military-affiliated students.

"The faculty members and staff are very welcoming and warm. A lot of them are prior military as well so I feel like I can relate to them. It's a close-knit environment," she said.

She feels that the university provides helpful support for veterans as well as soldiers who want to continue their studies while stationed elsewhere.

"It's very empowering. A lot of people who are transitioning out of the Army and want to pursue their education decide to come to Texas A&M," said Reyes-Tome. "If active-duty members have to do mandatory training or if they have to deploy they can take classes online. As far as I know, the faculty members have been very accommodating to their needs. From everybody that I've interacted with it's been a really enriching experience."

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“Veterans often don’t recognize the fact that they have a lot of the skills necessary to be good entrepreneurs.”

—Edward Molina, Director, Arizona Veterans Business Outreach Center, Cochise College, Sierra Vista, Ariz.

ARIZONA VETERANS MEAN BUSINESS

The Arizona Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), which opened less than a year ago, is located at Cochise College in Sierra Vista, Ariz., and available to veterans throughout the state.

“We make veterans aware of the business resources that are available to them through the U.S. SBA [Small Business Administration] and other resource partners here in Sierra Vista, specifically the Small Business Development Center, which is also located at Cochise College,” said Edward Molina, director of VBOC.

Services include training seminars, counseling, resources, mentorship, and assistance with putting together a business plan and identifying lending institutions that can help veterans finance their ventures.

“What we attempt to highlight is that veterans often don’t recognize the fact that they have a lot of the skills necessary to be good entrepreneurs,” Molina said.

Molina, a veteran who served more than 20 years in the Army, noted that when service members first transition out of the military, starting a business isn’t usually the first thought that comes to mind. But there is a strong history of veterans’ businesses in the United States. The center is there to offer encouragement, tools and resources to get started.

“One of the things that I tell them is that there is no bad business idea, provided that you have identified a problem and a corresponding solution, provided you have identified a location, and

provided that it is the right time for you, personally,” Molina said.

The center’s mission is to help veterans think about whether they are ready and able to launch their own businesses.

“Even if they don’t move immediately to start a business after attending a seminar, at least we’ve planted the seed and made them aware of the resources that are available,” Molina said. “Three years down the road, four years down the road, 10 years down the road, they may say, ‘OK, now I’m ready. I’m able to take the risk. I can move forward. I remember that VBOC was there, the U.S. SBA was there, and the SCORE counselors were there. I’m going to reach back to them and get some mentorship and have them help me put my business plan together.” —WS

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Delta Company, 52nd Infantry Regiment (Long Range Surveillance, LRS) unit attached to 3rd Cavalry Regiment, conducts Special Patrol Infiltration Exfiltration System training, Oct. 2, 2015. The unit had its deactivation ceremony Jan. 10, 2017, inside the III Corps building at Fort Hood, Texas. This was the last active-duty LRS unit in the Army. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Erik Warren.



ON-BASE CHARTER BOOSTS STUDENTS OF MILITARY FAMILIES

Across the tri-county area surrounding Charleston, S.C., numerous education programs provide support for military-connected students.

In yet another option for the children of active-duty military, Joint Base Charleston became home to Palmetto Scholars Academy (PSA) in January 2016. PSA is an award-winning charter school for gifted and talented children. The move was the result of years of work to secure the permissions and funding needed to build on Joint Base Charleston. The school, which currently serves 300 students in grades 6–12, is part of the South Carolina Public Charter School District.

When it opened in 2010, PSA was the first gifted and talented public charter school in South Carolina. Originally located in a former Head Start building on the former Charleston Naval Complex in North Charleston, the school's growth outpaced its budget in the first few years, leaving the facility's administration looking for creative funding solutions. Board members helped to pay teacher salaries, and the mother of Stacey Lindbergh, PSA's board chairman, even sold her house to help keep the school afloat. But even as the school was

able to leap its early financial hurdles, it still was left with a space problem.

Lindbergh turned to then-commander of Joint Base Charleston, Col. Robert McComb, for help.

"Going to Col. McComb was a long shot. I didn't know if it was going to work, but after talking to him, I knew we were going to be successful," Lindbergh said, according to an article by Joint Base Charleston. "If it weren't for Col. McComb, I don't think we would have ever found a new home."

McComb helped secure a facility on base, also made possible by \$8.5 million in bonds issued through the South Carolina Jobs-Economic Development Authority.

"With no degree of overstatement, I believe this school will literally transform the experience of military families who serve here," current Joint Base Charleston Commander Col. Robert Lyman said when recently presenting Lindbergh with the Commander's Public Service Award. "It marks a new educational opportunity, right in our backyard."

To make it easier for children whose parents currently serve, a recently enacted law in




Students from Palmetto Scholars Academy, located on Joint Base Charleston, participate in the fifth annual Palmetto Cyber Defense Competition at Trident Technical College in North Charleston, S.C., April 8, 2017. Hosted by SPAWAR Systems Center Atlantic, the event focused on developing networking and cyber security skills through STEM. U.S. Navy photo by Joe Bullinger


South Carolina allows charter schools to reserve a percentage of their total student body for children of active-duty military personnel assigned to military installations that provide land or facilities. PSA reserves about 20 percent of its slots.


"Being an old military brat myself, I know how important it is for military kids to get a good education as well as have a good environment in which to learn," Lindbergh said. —CD and WS


Editor's note: Col. Lyman is a recipient of the Association of Defense Communities' 2017 Military Leadership Award. (See "Setting a High Bar in the Lowcountry" on page 54.)


FIVE GREAT IDEAS TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

 **1** Access to college is a family issue. Support programs that create educational opportunity for the entire military family.

 **2** You don't need something new. Create a pathway that connects various educational programs in your community.

 **3** The G.I. Bill is great, but college still is very expensive. Think about how you can make it more affordable.

 **4** Look for outside support, such as the National Math and Science Initiative, to fund innovative efforts.

 **5** Look for ways to help service members get a jump on their transition through programs that offer credit for military service.



Our commitment to [veterans and military families] has to be appropriate to the commitment they have made to us.

—Marc Nigliazzo, President, Texas A&M University—Central Texas

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TAMUCT's leadership prides itself on creating a military-friendly culture for veterans such as Reyes-Tome.

"We have a very clear mission in serving military families and military personnel. It's been a part of our heritage, and it always will be," said Marc Nigliazzo, TAMUCT's president.

Since its founding, TAMUCT has focused on serving the military community. The university was founded in 2009 with 672 acres deeded from Fort Hood through the Department of the Army. Almost 49 percent

of students are military-affiliated, and it has the second-largest student veteran population in the Texas A&M system.

"We try to do everything we can to make them feel welcome and to recognize the sacrifice they made in their service," said Nigliazzo. "Our commitment to them has to be appropriate to the commitment they have made to us. That's our driving force at the university."

The collaboration among the three education systems is ongoing, and the leaders meet regularly in order to be

intentional about their efforts and to align their programs to create viable pathways for students. They also conduct briefings with Fort Hood's leadership and present at orientations for new brigade commanders, command sergeant majors and their spouses in order to increase awareness of their programs and to make sure that they are providing services that meet military families' needs.

Working together, Central Texas schools are opening opportunities for members of the military and their families wherever their paths may lead. 🇺🇸

In May 2009, 662 acres of the Fort Hood military reservation were donated to the university by the U.S. Army. The donated land currently is being used to develop the university's new permanent main campus. Construction of Founder's Hall (below), TAMUCT's first permanent building on the new campus site began in August 2010, and the grand opening ceremony was held on May 24, 2012. The \$40 million, 103,000-square-foot building has classroom space, a lecture hall, student services, enrollment services, administrative offices, support services and a campus bookstore.



When our men and women in uniform complete their military service, they leave their bases and choose new homes across the street or across the country. Within minutes, they go from service members to service veterans.

But their commitment to our nation never weakens, and our country and communities never waver in their dedication to support them, no matter what lies ahead.

America's Defense Communities talked with leaders and veterans in two Great American Defense Communities about what they do to

STAND UP FOR THOSE WHO STAND FOR US

By Andrea Downing Peck and Willona M. Sloan



Alamo-San Antonio Region, Texas
West Valley Partners, Ariz.

ALL IN A DAY

Unemployed, on the verge of homelessness and estranged from the military for more than 25 years, Carla McCullough arrived at the fourth annual Glendale (Ariz.) Stand Up for Veterans with little hope and nothing to lose.

McCullough, 52, an Army veteran, was looking for resources to return to school to expand her skills as a surgical technician. Much to her surprise, McCullough found much more than that. She discovered a path toward emotional, physical and financial well-being at the event at Glendale Community College.

"I went just to see what was going on," she said. "I met all these people there so willing to help and guide and assist whatever your needs are. I can't believe that I shut myself off from all that wonderfulness for all this time. I didn't have to be alone. I didn't have to be like that."

At Stand Up for Veterans, McCullough was put in touch with an American Legion claims officer who guided her through the claims process with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Soon afterward, McCullough, a victim of military sexual trauma nearly 30 years ago, received the treatment she needed to overcome



Glendale, Ariz., Mayor Jerry Weiers (above), helps prepare lunch for veterans and attendees at the fourth annual Stand Up for Veterans event Sept. 24, 2016, which included representatives from the city of Phoenix and office of U.S. Rep. Ruben Gallego (D).

“I didn’t have to be alone. I didn’t have to be like that.”

—Carla McCullough, Army veteran, Glendale, Ariz.

her past trauma, as well as housing and employment assistance to rebuild her life.

“From September 2016 to today, my life is completely different,” said McCullough, who now works for the VA as a caregiver for the elderly and part-time as a surgical technician at a Phoenix hospital. “Mind you, there are still ups and downs, but I am 98 percent better than I was then. I still have a long way to go, but I’m working. The repo man isn’t chasing down my car; I have a nice little condo, and I’m not in a horrible relationship.”

After leaving military service in 1990, McCullough says, she avoided having anything to do with the military or veterans organizations. Having spent so much time away from other service members, McCullough was surprised to find a “conglomeration of camaraderie and resources” at Stand Up.

McCullough is grateful not only for the initial assistance she received at the Glendale event, but also for the ongoing support from the people she was introduced to there.

“You develop friendships and they guide you,” McCullough said. “They help you and move you forward and they put you

in contact with people that you need. Everyone’s situation is different, but there is always a resource they can guide you to that can help you.”

Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers founded Stand Up for Veterans in 2013. A former chairman of the Military Affairs Committee in the Arizona House of Representatives, Weiers says Stand Up partially is a response to the annual “Stand Down” events for veterans that take place in Phoenix and other cities nationwide. While each Stand Down aims to end veteran homelessness, Weiers’ goal is to provide assistance that keeps veterans from ever landing on the streets.

“Why don’t we stand up for our veterans?” asked Weiers, who leads the community of more than 226,000 residents, including Arizona’s second-largest veteran population. “Let’s take care of the small problems before they become big problems. Try to identify any and everything possible we can do to allow veterans to keep their lives together.”

Stand Up brings together volunteers and representatives from nearly 100 veteran service organizations, employers, social service agencies and nonprofit groups in

the Glendale and greater western Maricopa County area to offer veterans legal and social services assistance, résumé advice and job opportunities. Sandy Coor Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1433 in Glendale serves as the nonprofit administrator of the event, working in partnership with the organizing committee.

In 2016, 324 registered veterans and 236 families attended the one-day event, with 13 former service members ringing the “you’re hired” bell at the center of the room. Weiers brings the bell to Stand Up each year to generate excitement each time a veteran receives a job offer and an opportunity to turn their lives around.

“It literally makes chills go down your back and the hair stand up on back of your neck,” Weiers said of his reaction each time the bell is rung. “This veteran gets to go home and say, ‘I got a job today.’ There are not many things you can say that make a stronger statement than, ‘I now have the ability to take care of my family.’”

Stand Up separates itself from other veteran job and benefits fairs by also having representatives from nearly two dozen court systems in attendance, enabling veterans to address legal issues

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A new deck hockey rink recently was opened on Luke Air Force Base through a gift from Fighter Country Partnership. In the photo above, Luke family members take aim at players from the Arizona Coyotes prior to the ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 13, 2017. Connor Murphy, Anthony DeAngelo, Alex Goligoski and Jordan Martinook from the Coyotes attended the ceremony to show support and give Luke airmen some hockey tips. The Coyotes also are a partner and sponsor for the rink. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman James Hensley.

SUPPORT THAT'S RIGHT ON BASE

In July 2016, when Brig. Gen. Brook Leonard became commander of the 56th Fighter Wing at Luke Air Force Base outside Glendale in Maricopa County, Ariz., he assumed responsibility for more than 5,300 military personnel and the base's new mission of training pilots for the Air Force's next-generation fighter, the F-35 Lightning II. But he also became a community leader for more than 1,200 civilians on the base and 10,000 family members.

And while Luke provides many support programs for airmen and their families, over the past few years, budget cuts have forced it and many other bases to reduce or eliminate many services.

That's where Fighter Country Partnership (FCP) comes into play. Founded in 1997 by civic leaders and elected officials, FCP is a nonprofit community and advocacy support group for Luke AFB that is supported by membership and donations. A sister organization, Fighter Country Foundation, was added in 2006.

According to Ron Sites, executive director and president of Fighter Country Partnership, his organization's role supplements the base's mission and community support activities, adding that it's a "huge and humbling" responsibility. Sites said the group's

efforts fall into three main areas: morale and well-being, supporting the culture and tradition of the military, and the sustainability of Luke's mission.

"Our role is enhancing the quality of life. We never want to create the perception that Luke can't take care of their own, because they can," Sites said in a recent interview with a local business that supports FCP. "What we do is to make sure that we protect that quality of life."

FCP provides a variety of services including financial counseling for airmen and their spouses, and numerous events throughout the year such as the "Dorm Dweller" holiday party for airmen who live in the dorms on base and are unable to go home to be with family. FCP partners with local businesses to provide support, prizes and other logistics. Fundraising events such as an annual golf tournament help generate resources and awareness for FCP's efforts.

The foundation has initiated programs such as Operation Thunderbox, which collects comfort items and pays for boxes and postage to send 450 care packages a year around the world. Operation Warmheart assists military families in times of hardships for things that Air Force Aid is unable to help cover. The foundation also

provides support and services to help Luke service members cope with the demands of deployments and to help families during separations. Base funds are limited for these programs. A program called Hearts Apart provides monthly activities that offer social, recreational and morale support through a wide range of events, including picnics, bowling, arts and crafts, spouse luncheons, sports events, children's activities, and concerts.

"There's literally nobody in the country doing what we're doing to support these families out at Luke," Sites told the local CBS television affiliate in Phoenix last year. "And it's not just Air Force. It's Navy families. It's Marine families. It's really total force integration, and we get to support all of those families."

FCP also has helped organize a summer camp for military children with autism. Former F-16 fighter pilot Sam Mann told the CBS affiliate that FCP had a positive impact on his son.

"Had we not been introduced to that through Fighter Country Partnership, that's an opportunity we would have missed out on," Mann said. "Through my two decades in the Air Force, I've been to several bases and there's nothing like Fighter Country Partnership that I've seen at other bases." —CD

“This veteran gets to go home and say, ‘I got a job today.’”

—Jerry Weiers, Mayor, Glendale, Ariz.

“ Continued from page 40

that often created roadblocks to their employment and education. In many instances, veterans with lingering legal issues walk out with warrants quashed, community service work projects completed or their driver’s licenses reinstated.

While Stand Up has produced numerous success stories, Weiers said one of the most memorable moments occurred last year when a judge enabled a veteran to complete community service that day and have his driver’s license immediately reinstated, ending what the veteran said was 20 years of frustration.

“He literally came out the door jumping and celebrating,” Weiers recalled. “It was incredible. He now had the missing tool that was keeping him from getting a job and being able to support himself.”

Air Force veteran Chris Spicer, co-coordinator for the Glendale Stand Up for Veterans, praises the program for giving veterans a “place of safety to come and deal with their situations.” Though dozens of organizations and agencies offer assistance to veterans, Spicer said accessing help often can be difficult and frustrating. Stand Up solves that problem by bringing a wide assortment of organizations together in one place.

“With Stand Up, you come there with an issue you want to get handled and by god it gets handled that day,” he said. “It does not take 14 [web pages] before

frustration settles in. You know where you are going right when you get there.”

McCullough credits the Glendale Stand Up for turning her life around.

“I am so grateful I had the opportunity to be there,” she said. “I am moving toward that next goal. Now I have a purpose and a drive and a vision. I’ve come a long way. I would like for everybody to have that same opportunity, because there is hope and people do care. We are not alone.”

While the unemployment rate for veterans has been on a downward trajectory, Spicer said Stand Up for Veterans will continue to have an important role to play, including helping reduce the veteran suicide rate.

“There is always going to be a need for support,” Spicer said. “That’s what Stand Up does most here in Glendale and across the valley. It gives a focal point for veterans to find somewhere where somebody gives a darn about what’s going on in their life.” —ADP

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS SERVE SAN ANTONIO’S HEROES

Michael Holloway, retired from the U.S. Navy, was looking for a weatherization service to modify his home when he learned about a special program for veterans in the San Antonio region.

He called the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG). During his consultation, a representative mentioned that in addition to the insulation improvements, he might also qualify for home repairs under the AACOG Homes for Texas Heroes program.

The program offered exactly what he needed and more than he could have ever anticipated.

“They put a whole roof on the house,” he said. “I kept waiting for a bill. I was very surprised and am still surprised.” No bill ever came.

Holloway had been saving for a new roof, but because of his limited budget he was unsure if he could afford the repairs at all.

“I was actually thinking over the last couple of years about whether I was going to stay here or sell it and get something really small, but that’s a 30-year roof so there’s no reason to leave now,” Holloway said after the repairs.

AACOG was established in 1967 as a voluntary association of local governments and organizations that covers 13 counties in the San Antonio region. The organization supports Joint Base San Antonio which includes Fort Sam Houston, Camp Bullis, Lackland AFB, Lackland Training Annex and Randolph AFB.

San Antonio has been termed “Military City USA” due to the population of the



military-affiliated community in the area. U.S. Census data identify Texas as one of the states with a high veteran population and also lists Texas among the states with the highest percentage of veterans with a service-connected disability. That's why veterans services like the AACOG Homes for Texas Heroes program make a huge difference.

The program, which was funded by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission, leveraged community partnerships with the goal of assisting veterans like Holloway, dependents and surviving spouses with accessibility home modifications, rehabilitation and repairs.

"We found that there were a lot of veterans who were living on pensions and military retirement, and there weren't a lot of additional funds to go toward major modifications as individuals age, such as bathroom modifications and walk-in showers," said AACOG Regional Services Director Gloria Vasquez. "For a lot of the veterans in our program that we were able to serve, that was a high priority."

The program performed emergency repairs and also made modifications such as creating better accessibility for clients using wheelchairs.

"In one case, the person did not have a ramp, and they had no concrete landing or anything. It was just dirt and grass, and the veteran was having a difficult time getting in and out of the home," Vasquez said. They were able to build a ramp and add a short sidewalk to make accessibility easier for the client.

"We are an aging nation with the Baby Boomers coming of age and there's just a huge need," Vasquez said. "When we came across this project, and finding out that we would be able to specifically tailor the program to assist veterans and their families, it was just a tremendous opportunity. We exceeded our deliverables by huge numbers."

While the grant funding has now expired, the program exceeded its 2016 goals



A veteran visits the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio. Photo provided by the Alamo Area Council of Governments.

of providing home modifications and accessibility by 216 percent, serving 82 veteran clients.

For Mary Alvarez, the program provided a full set of modifications for her bathroom, including a walk-in shower and modified toilet. AACOG took over when her husband of 48 years passed away before completing the project.

"It was a lot of help," she said. "My husband was a Marine. He's not here, but he's still helping through the program."

To show her gratitude for something she said "really picked up my spirit," she cooked for the workers, making her favorite brisket and shrimp alfredo recipes.

"I had a lot of good people come out and work with us. They helped us a lot. We're all happy about it," Alvarez said.

A new AACOG program will launch in late June with the goal of streamlining services for veterans and military-affiliated individuals and families. The successful national program AmericaServes will launch its 10th center in the country with TXServes. Administered by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse

University through a \$5 million Walmart Foundation donation, TXServes will help fill holes in services for veterans in the San Antonio region.

AACOG will act as the control center for TXServes and provide coordination between providers.

"TXServes enables us to connect referral sources so that there is no wrong door for a veteran or family member," said Annie Erickson, director of TXServes-San Antonio at AACOG. "They are able to enter at any point with any service. It's a lot more customer-friendly for our veterans and a lot more efficient for the referral sources."

The program will launch first in Bexar County with more than 40 providers, and the network will continue to build from there.

"It's leveraging the resources that many wonderful programs have in the San Antonio area," Erickson said.

In year two, the program will extend to seven surrounding counties. After two years, the program will cover all 13 local counties. This is a two-year grant, so TXServes is working to be sustainable after the grant ends.

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IN ITS HOMETOWN, USAA HELPS FIND HOMES FOR VETS

Like most San Antonians, Milby Hartwell is proud of her region's rich culture as a defense community and wants the best for those who have served the nation.

"We live in Military City USA," she said, referencing one of the region's nicknames. "It doesn't feel right and isn't what we want for our veterans who have served to be homeless on the street."

In January 2015, Mayor Ivy R. Taylor announced the city was joining the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, a federal program supported by the White House, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the National League of Cities.

A coalition of local officials and organizations came together to help veterans find housing and remain engaged in the continuum of care.

Hartwell and her colleagues have played a big part. She is director of corporate responsibility at USAA, which is a financial services firm that is headquartered in San Antonio and prides itself on being a good citizen and neighbor.

USAA pitched in \$2.1 million to support the Mayors Challenge in San Antonio.

At least 1,335 San Antonio veterans were placed in housing in the first 15 months of the initiative. Nonprofit partners are providing case management, and when necessary connecting them with medical care or preparing them for the workforce.

Tommy Riester had some bad luck after he finished nine years of Navy service. He was diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and had what he calls "a series of failing marriages."

"And finally, the last marriage, I just couldn't take it anymore, so I was put into a VA mental hospital because of

a breakdown, and I spent 30 days in there, and then after being released, they didn't have anywhere for me to go," Riester said.

He was introduced to Teresa Estrada at Family Endeavors, a San Antonio-based nonprofit supporting families, children and veterans, and one of the groups helping with the Mayors Challenge. Once housing was stabilized, Estrada helped him get mental health services and then matched him with Cooper, a PTSD service dog.

"If I have nightmares, he can get me up," Riester said of Cooper. "If I have problems, he can open doors. He's a constant shadow."

Estrada says Riester is more active and outgoing now. He volunteers as part of a group whose mission is to make sure no veteran dies alone.

"And now he's out here helping and getting involved in the community and giving back," Estrada said.

For USAA, supporting community programs like these are part of the company's long-time "humanity," according to Justin Schmitt, assistant vice president for corporate responsibility.

USAA's signature philanthropic cause is military family resiliency across the country. Initiatives are aimed at helping spouses and veterans find jobs, providing financial education for military families, assisting families grieving the loss of a fallen service member, and providing training and support for the roughly 5.5 million military caregivers in the United States.

"You can become a military caregiver overnight without expecting it," Schmitt said, "and your life can become dramatically different."

To help understand the unique challenges facing caregivers of those who are in the military, those who come home with a

service-connected disability or those with hidden wounds, USAA has worked with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, which is focused on supporting what Dole calls "hidden heroes."

USAA has teamed with PsychArmor Institute to open the first-ever online School for Military and Veteran Caregivers and Families to provide training on such matters as dealing with hidden wounds, navigating the VA and managing time for yourself. In just seven months, about 46,000 caregivers have taken courses online at psycharmor.org/caregivers.

In communities where USAA has a physical presence, there are additional local initiatives, such as promoting STEM education, offering financial literacy services for military families, supporting safety and natural disaster response, fighting hunger, and—of course—reducing homelessness.

In San Antonio, where veteran homelessness is "effectively ended," Hartwell said "there will always be a continued and enduring commitment, because new people will be moving in and others may find themselves facing new challenges, but whenever we see those numbers down, it's great."

Hartwell and Schmitt both volunteered to help with the official "point in time" head count in January to see exactly how many people were living on the streets. Schmitt recalls talking with a man named Woody on a bus bench who had tattered clothes, a long beard and a Vietnam Veteran hat.

"I introduced myself, said I was part of a team to count the homeless in our community and asked if he was homeless. He said, 'If you'd asked me a year ago, I'd say yes. But thanks to USAA's help, I have somewhere to live now. I'm just waiting for the bus to take me home.'" —RF

Editor's Note: USAA is a sponsor of the 2017 Great American Defense Communities program.

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Robert A Henderson, a retired U.S. Marine Corps staff sergeant, talks about his experience as a Pearl Harbor survivor in a 2015 interview with Will Hines, who was working on a Clemson University undergraduate project preserving veterans' stories for the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project. "The first plane flew so close to me I could have thrown a rock and hit it," Henderson said. He went on to serve the duration of World War II, culminating at the Battle of Okinawa. "I was in the first and last battles of the war." U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ken Scar.

5 GREAT WAYS TO MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR VETERANS

- ✓ **1** Make resources available to help them show employers how their skills and experiences are transferrable to civilian positions.
- ✓ **2** Remember that their loved ones also have made great sacrifices for our country and deserve continued support, especially if they are caregivers for veterans.
- ✓ **3** Encourage community members to show tribute year-round—not just one day of the year—even through small gestures.
- ✓ **4** Involve active-duty service members in your veterans programming. It helps them connect and reinforces that your community is a great place to live after military service.
- ✓ **5** Work with them to tell their stories to those in the community and for future generations, because their experiences are important to the history of your region and our country. The Library of Congress's Veterans History Project is a great way to record your local veterans' moments of living history.



Michael Holloway once thought he'd have to move out of his house, until he heard about the Alamo Area Council of Governments' Homes for Texas Heroes program, which replaced his roof free of charge. Photo provided by the Alamo Area Council of Governments.

“ Continued from page 43

The providers vary in size. Some traditionally have supported veterans, and others have not. All have been vetted to ensure that they can serve the needs of the military community. Service providers will include organizations such as Family Endeavors, Haven for Hope, the VA hospital system, Goodwill and LiftFund. The goal is to eliminate barriers to services.

“This is very transparent and holds everyone accountable in providing the services. [For the referral source], you can actually see what is happening to the veteran you referred,” Erickson said. “Anyone that refers a veteran can then have access to see what services that veteran was able to obtain.”

At the coordination center, AACOG also will be able to see which agencies have available funding, which ebbs and flows. This also will cut down on clients being bounced around in the system or being sent from agency to agency around the area without obtaining services.

Making the military-affiliated community feel welcome is part of San Antonio's brand. The region's leaders want to ensure that veterans who choose to transition into the community have access to everything they need to be successful.

“The community, in collaboration with the military, looks to be a viable source to give those who have served their country honorably and the families who have

sacrificed a place where they can reside and partake of what's being offered,” said retired Maj. Gen. Alfred Valenzuela, president and chairman of the board for the Military & Veteran Community Collaborative. The collaborative will serve as an advisory arm to AACOG on the initiative.

“TXServes and the Institute of Military Veterans and Families in Syracuse University have looked to find examples of places that epitomize the working relationship between the community and the military,” Valenzuela said. “San Antonio offers that, and it's a perfect spot to be able to set up a network that focuses on the veteran-serving organizations that help people transition from military life to civilian community life.” —WS



A LEADERSHIP BLUEPRINT:

How the right
relationships and vision
can make the difference

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more,
do more and become more, you are a leader.

—John Quincy Adams



Lt. Gen. Darryl L. Roberson, commander, Air Education and Training Command, Joint Base San Antonio, speaks to graduating airmen and other San Antonio Fiesta Military Parade attendees, April 21, 2017. U.S. Air Force photo by Lori Bultman.

By Barbara Bryant

Although leadership can be exhibited in a variety of ways, its underpinnings are consistent; its results, universal. Successful leaders establish strong, clear lines of communication, seek out and consider all stakeholders' perspectives, find ways to collaborate with a broad spectrum of allies, and above all, lead by example.

For more than three decades, the peer-juried Defense Community Awards

have honored those individuals whose leadership is making a difference in their communities and for other communities across the country.

None of the 2017 Defense Communities Award recipients we talked to provided a comprehensive definition of "leadership," but each clearly exhibited its qualities in many ways. They discussed the importance of understanding and addressing the needs and concerns of all who are affected

by the presence—or loss—of a military installation. They talked of motivating those who can and wish to support the nation's defenders, and of setting a performance bar for others that is never higher than they set for themselves.

This year's award recipients will leave behind an enduring footprint of outstanding results and goodwill, benefiting and honoring the communities where they've lived and served. These are their stories.

UTAH AVIATION HALL OF FAME



Utah State Sen. Jerry W. Stevenson speaks during the opening ceremony for the newly renovated Utah Aviation Hall of Fame, located at the Hill Aerospace Museum, Oct. 14, 2016. U.S. Air Force photo by Paul Holcomb.

Planting Seeds to Cultivate Flourishing Partnerships



Friends describe Jerry Stevenson as quiet, unassuming and self-deprecating, evidenced by his tendency to call himself “an onion farmer”—a reference to the type of farm he grew up on. However, this description does not reveal that he now owns and manages a thriving 130-acre commercial nursery in Davis County, Utah. But those who know him also salute Stevenson as a hard-working state senator, former mayor and long-time advocate for Hill Air Force Base’s military mission and economic development activities, which benefit the Air Force, surrounding communities and entire state.



“Jerry is a servant-leader. He’s understated but effective in fostering military-related business growth at the base,” remarked retired Lt. Gen. Kevin Sullivan, who commanded the Ogden Air Logistics Center at Hill from 2003 to 2007. “I think he saw a bit of himself—how he chose to serve the city of Layton and the state—in the way those in uniform choose to serve their country. He was comfortable with and enjoyed being around military personnel, accepted every award ceremony and dinner event invitation and understood the issues the base was facing. That’s made him very successful in championing projects to ensure the base’s sustainability.”

For his part, Stevenson clearly was impressed by his partners on the base.

“When I started working with the state on the base’s behalf and found myself sitting next to a two-star general, you could have rolled me under the table, I was so surprised. But when you can work with people of that caliber and see the quality of their service and what they do for the country, it’s easy to stay involved, and that’s a big part of what leadership is about,” he explained.

Stevenson’s support for Hill has spanned more than two decades, beginning with his eight-year stint on Layton’s city council, after which he served for 12 years as mayor. During these early stages of his policy-making career, he championed the growth and eventually became president of the Utah Defense Alliance (UDA), which has led the state’s base advocacy and support efforts in the Air Force and at the Pentagon. In the 1990s, the UDA launched a concerted drive to publicize the base’s flying and intercontinental ballistic missile support missions, as well as its importance to the state and surrounding communities, to ensure that the base survived early base realignment and closure rounds.

“I was concerned about Layton, which borders the south end of the base because Hill was its biggest employer and feared that if it closed, the city’s economy might not survive during my lifetime,” Stevenson recalled. “So, I joined concerned residents in my and other cities and counties in forming

the UDA to serve as the point of the spear in marketing Hill at the state and national levels. Once the base’s mission was secure in the early 2000s, the alliance started to focus on economic initiatives for the base and surrounding community and our efforts grew to cover other bases in the state.”

The UDA has remained highly active, advocating, with support from U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, to expand the base’s mission, most recently by lobbying for the base to host the first operational wing of the new F-35A Lightning II fighter jets. Eventually, Hill will host three squadrons of the aircraft, which many F-16 pilots will be trained to fly.

The UDA has successfully pursued other defense activity as well, such as the campaign to bring the Utah Data Center, a \$1.5 billion intelligence data storage center run by the National Security Agency, to Camp Williams, a National Guard training site in Bluffdale, about 20 miles south of Salt Lake City.

One of Stevenson’s biggest successes was the key role he played working with Hatch, to legislate at the state level in 2007 the establishment of Utah’s Military Installation Development Authority (MIDA), which supports the establishment of enhanced use leases (EUL) between the military and private firms. These leases allow developers to construct buildings and other infrastructure on underused military land, which are used by the military and private firms to conduct projects that support the base’s mission and contribute to the area’s economic development. MIDA, whose leaders are executives of cities and counties that surround military bases, is authorized to provide tax increment financing to support such projects and act as an independent third party to hold and manage in-kind payments for the military and developers.

Stevenson conceded that, when MIDA was being formed, some cities were wary of the proposal to set up a development authority with the ability to use future local taxes to fund projects, but staunch support from the governor’s office, the state legislature and a constituency that

has enormous respect for the military has allowed him to push successfully for passage of additional MIDA legislation each year since 2010.

As co-chairman of MIDA, a role he has held since the organization was formed, Stevenson oversaw the 2008 execution of the largest Department of Defense EUL to date, which paved the way for the development of the 550-acre Falcon Hill National Aerospace Research Park on the west side of Hill AFB. The complex houses the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center’s Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Systems Directorate and the ICBM Prime Integration office, and provides commercial and government office and research space for base contractors and other aerospace industries. The project also involves development of retail businesses, restaurants and two hotels outside the base gate. To support this project, the state has provided grants and issued bonds to construct buildings and highway improvements to improve traffic flow.

The first phase of the project, involving the development of 180 acres, was expected to infuse \$500 million into the state economy. When fully developed and fully occupied, the research park could create more than 15,000 aerospace jobs.

Then-Gov. Jon Huntsman hailed the EUL, saying, “This project will promote our vision of the future for northern Utah as a growth center for the aerospace industry.”

Stevenson also plays a strong role in promoting and celebrating Hill AFB in the surrounding community. He works to provide funding for the Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Utah, which gives capital support to the Hill Aerospace Museum, and helps secure state funding for the bi-annual Warriors Over the Wasatch Airshow at Hill, which draws more than 700,000 attendees who learn from the flying demonstrations and static displays “where the Air Force has come from and where it’s going” while adding tourist dollars to the local economy. He also works with various chambers of commerce and other civic organizations that support Hill and spent many years chairing the board



Above: State and local leaders, along with base and Air Force leadership, break ground for a new building in the Falcon Hill National Aerospace Research Park at Hill Air Force Base, Jan. 18, 2012. From left to right, Rep. Lee Perry (R-Perry); Chief of Real Property Management Portfolio Air Force Real Property Agency John Busca; Falcon Hill Enhanced Use Lease Program Manager Darrin Wray; Clearfield Mayor Don Wood; Rep. Brad Dee (R-Ogden); Sen. Scott Jenkins (R-Weber); 75th Air Base Wing Commander Col. Sarah Zabel; Sen. Stuart Adams (R-Weber); Sen. Jerry Stevenson (R-Davis); Woodbury Corporate Vice President of Development Jeff Woodbury; Woodbury Corporate Secretary and Vice President of Commercial Management Randy Woodbury; Hunt Senior Vice President Juan Gonzalez-Garza; Rep. Steve Handy (R-Layton); and Rep. Brad Wilson (R-Kaysville). U.S. Air Force photo by Alex Lloyd. **Left:** Utah's Senate chamber.



of trustees of Weber State University, which has a campus adjoining the base and awards engineering degrees that prepare students to join the base workforce. He has encouraged the public school system to focus on disciplines that are relevant to the aerospace industry as well.

But Hill AFB and the communities around it aren't the only areas in Utah that benefit from Stevenson's public service. In his role as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee he works to ensure funding for the UDA and MIDA and to attract more defense activity across Utah. He secured \$21.5 million in state funding to build an advanced software facility on the base, which will

provide jobs for 450 software engineers and computer specialists. Once the facility is completed in 2018, it will be donated to the Air Force, which will use it to support the base's software development and maintenance activities.

He also is involved in the state's current efforts through MIDA to use an EUL to establish a military retreat in the Park City area that would become a year-round resort for military families, featuring a four-star hotel, downhill skiing and mountain biking.

"In this project, we've found ourselves in the unusual position of marketing a ski lift as community infrastructure, a designation that's usually reserved for roads, water,

storm sewers or sewer pipes," Stevenson said with a laugh.

"Sen. Stevenson understands from local, state and business standpoints what can be done to enhance Hill Air Force Base's mission and help the state's economy," said Gary Harter, executive director of the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs. "He's an effective leader because he brings many viewpoints to the table. His work with mayors, legislative committees and with leaders on the base equipped him to make the case for Hill's outstanding performance and its benefits to the surrounding communities." 📌

Sen. Jerry Stevenson has been recognized with ADC's 2017 State Leadership Award.

★ ★ 2017 ★ ★
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**2017 JOHN LYNCH BASE
 REDEVELOPMENT
 LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Ivy Owen, PCED, EDFP
*Executive Director, Fort Chaffee
 Redevelopment Authority*

**2017 MILITARY
 LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Colonel Robert Lyman
*Commander, 628th Air Base Wing,
 Joint Base Charleston, S.C.*

**2017 STATE
 LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Senator Jerry Stevenson
Utah State Senate

**2017 PRESIDENT'S
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Lieutenant General Darryl Roberson
*Commander, Air Education and Training
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Learn more: defensecommunities.org/awards





Col. Robert Lyman, Joint Base Charleston commander, left, meets Ruben Barnett Jr. at his new home, Dec. 21, 2016. The Barnett family lost all their belongings in a house fire the day before Thanksgiving. Photo provided by the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce.



Setting a High Bar in the Lowcountry



“Meet and don’t be afraid to ask those who head civic organizations and other civilian leaders for help and advice on the challenges you face. It’s a way to get some great ideas for solutions.”



(1) Col. Robert Lyman, Joint Base Charleston commander, right, meets with Charleston County Sheriff J. Al Cannon during a tour of the Charleston County Consolidated 911 Center, March 30, 2017. The Enhanced 911 initiative combines the call centers for the 628th Security Forces Squadron and fire department with the Charleston County Consolidated 911 Center to shorten response times and save money.
(2) Lyman, left, and Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter Darius Rucker participate in a live ESPN Veterans Day broadcast from Joint Base Charleston, Nov. 7, 2016. U.S. Air Force photos by Airman Megan Munoz.

That's the message Col. Robert Lyman will convey to the officer who succeeds him as commander of the 628th Air Base Wing and Joint Base Charleston (S.C.) as he prepares to move on to his next assignment as Director of Communications for Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. His policy of military-civilian outreach and collaboration has spawned beneficial initiatives inside and outside the fence that support the base's mission while improving the quality of life for many people on base and in Charleston.

He has worked on these initiatives while running Joint Base Charleston, which hosts more than 60 Department of Defense and federal agencies. The 628th Air Base Wing supports more than 90,000 airmen, sailors,

soldiers, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and their families. The base maintains \$7.5 billion in property and capital assets spanning three seaports, two civilian-military airfields, 39 miles of rail and 22 miles of coastline across almost 24,000 acres. The base focuses on six distinct missions: installation support, airlift and airdrop operations, training naval nuclear operators, deployable logistics, multi-mission warfighter support, and inter-agency cooperation.

A challenge all base commanders face is ensuring that the base has the resources and room it needs to carry out its mission while minimizing the amount of disruption its activities impose on the civilian communities that surround it. By partnering with the local governments and businesses and remaining sharply attuned to Charleston's priorities and concerns,

Lyman spearheaded some innovative solutions to a variety of communications, transportation and security challenges.

One major breakthrough was the signing of an agreement in March to tie the base in with Charleston County's consolidated 911 call system. Previously, an emergency call from the base might be transferred to various agencies before a responder was dispatched. Now, all local 911 calls and texts are fielded by the Charleston County Consolidated 911 Center, which relays the information immediately to the appropriate emergency response team, reducing response time and saving the base money.

Lyman also has dealt with potentially divisive safety and encroachment issues by reaching out to various stakeholders to devise mutually acceptable solutions.

He negotiated a potential issue with aircraft maker Boeing, which sought to build new facilities on one side of a shared civilian-military runway, a space the base wanted kept clear in case of emergencies. After consulting with the company, state commerce officials and other partners, a land swap was agreed to that would permit construction on the opposite side of the runway.

In addition, one of the base's gate entrances is near the city's civilian port, which caused heavy traffic jams for people headed to either facility.

"Col. Lyman brought together port, transportation and base security personnel to discuss how to improve traffic management. It's a simple approach, but he sees the importance of bringing all of the key people together to solve problems," said Mary Graham, chief advancement officer of the Metropolitan Charleston Chamber of Commerce, who works closely with Lyman on civilian-military issues.

Lyman also has worked closely with civilian emergency operations centers to evacuate base personnel before Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. To prepare for this contingency, he instructed the base's finance team to devise a plan to quickly reimburse service members for these evacuation expenses, in part by setting up an Emergency Family Activity Center where they could file reimbursement vouchers and take care of emergency-related problems affecting them or their dependents. As a result, when Hurricane Matthew hit South Carolina, more than 3,100 Air Force personnel already had been evacuated and had their expenses quickly reimbursed.

Lyman knows that education is a key issue for military families, and it is one that as the father of two daughters he shares. The elementary schools near the base historically have not had the highest academic ratings in the community, Graham noted.

"Several previous base commanders home-schooled their kids. But Col. Lyman has made a point of sending his kids to the school near the base," said Graham. "He believes it shows leadership, that military

members should participate fully in the community. He and his wife are very active school parents and their kids are having a great experience there. In addition, the base supports the Palmetto Scholars Academy, a charter school for gifted and talented students that recently moved from a very modest setting to more spacious and better equipped facilities on Joint Base Charleston to accommodate growing enrollment, which includes military dependents." (See "On-Base Charter Boosts Students of Military Families" on Page 36.)

Joint Base Charleston is collaborating with civilian organizations on a variety of health-related initiatives. The 628th Air Base Wing and the Ralph H. Johnson Veterans Affairs Medical Center are working with the Medical University of South Carolina and Palmetto Lowcountry Behavioral Health to coordinate mental health service continuity of care for active-duty service members. The base also is working with Trident USA Health Services and local hospitals to provide joint, continual medical education for civilian and military practitioners and share best practices, resulting in cost avoidance of \$900,000 per year in travel and training costs. The base also hopes to partner with local police and fire departments to conduct joint first-responder training, potentially in a single, dedicated facility that could be located on base and to co-locate a medical clinic on base in partnership with the VA hospital. The South Carolina National Guard has asked to create a readiness center on base with access to the airfield as well.

Open and frequent communication between the civilian and military communities is vital to identify and pursue these types of partnerships, Lyman pointed out.

"Offers to collaborate on mutually beneficial projects come from on and outside the base, through open dialogue and shared visions and needs," he said. "The right relationships and a healthy vision lead to these conversations."

In addition to these and other local initiatives, Lyman has reached out to the state to improve benefits for military personnel and their dependents, veterans and retirees with significant success. In


2016, for example, the South Carolina Military Base Task Force helped get a law passed that allows dependents of active duty personnel, veterans and retired personnel to immediately benefit from in-state tuition rates, waiving the mandatory one-year waiting period, a savings of up to \$9,000, explained task force Chairman Bill Bethea.

Lyman has made a variety of other suggestions on behalf of military families that the task force is pursuing. It has convinced the state board of education to fast-track state credentialing for military spouses who have out-of-state teaching credentials and won the same concession for lawyers. And the task force is working with the legislature to bring child care credentialing requirements in line with DOD's.

"Col. Lyman's constant availability, his willingness to reach out in an effective way to make his and the base community's concerns known and to help us advocate on the base's behalf have been very beneficial from the task force's perspective," said Bethea.

Local residents also have the opportunity to salute and provide assistance to base personnel and their families through the Palmetto Military Support Group, a nonprofit organization that conducts fundraising, attends and coordinates celebratory events, and in other ways helps the military community. Many other organizations and groups hold events for base personnel and encourage them to participate in the community.

The community shows its support and appreciation for Joint Base Charleston in many other ways, Lyman noted.

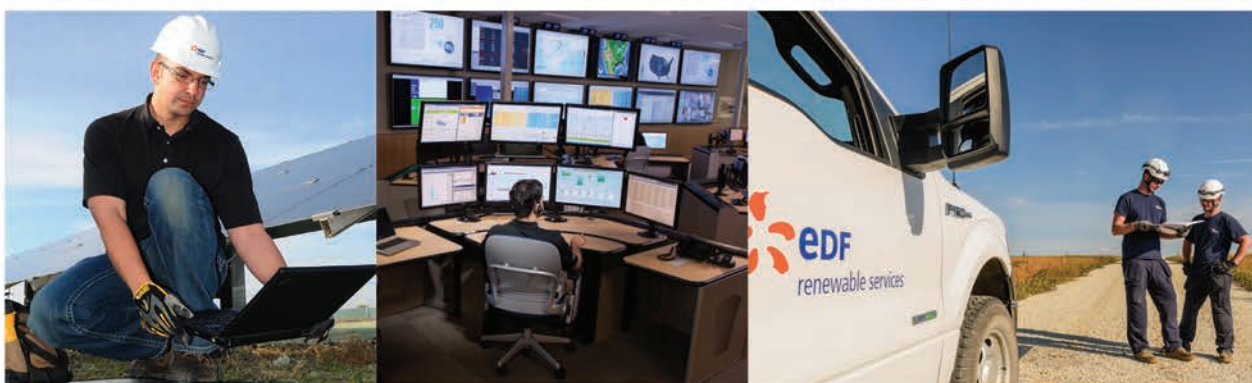
"The Charleston region is very warm and welcoming to military families. They work hard to make this, not just a duty station but a home," he said. "We get invited to the RiverDogs baseball games and Battery soccer club events. So many organizations honor us, invite us to speak at local functions and work to involve us in their activities. It's been a pleasure to serve here." 

Col. Robert Lyman is the recipient of ADC's 2017 Military Leadership Award, and the Charleston Region is a member of the 2017 class of Great American Defense Communities.



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‘He’s Done the Most with It’

The executive director of the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority has been working since 2007 to redevelop the site of a closed Army installation into a thriving, multi-use community and economic engine in western Arkansas.

vy Owen knew he was turning the corner in his drive to transform 7,000 acres of vacant land in western Arkansas into a thriving business and residential community when he overheard two women talking in a local Wal-Mart in late 2009.

“When a shopper who was asked where she lived answered, ‘Chaffee Crossing,’ I started to feel pretty good about where we were headed,” Owen recalled. He explained that up until then, people still were calling the community “Fort Chaffee” because the land had been part of a 72,000-acre Army post that was designated for closure in the 1995 base realignment and closure round.

“We’d been working hard to redevelop and rebrand the property and when I heard the resident refer to the community by its new name, I took that as a sign our efforts were really taking off,” he explained.

Owen relocated to Fort Smith, Ark., from Mississippi in 2007 to become the third executive director of the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA). He is responsible for developing the property to attract businesses, educational institutions and other organizations to this part of the state.

He knew that to spearhead the massive challenges involved in developing Chaffee Crossing, he would have to draw on the skills

he mastered as an economic and community developer in Mississippi and Tennessee. He brought more than 40 years of experience in the field to his new job, including serving as community development director for the seven communities of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, which was a challenge on several levels.

“They were already pretty successful with a lot of industry, two huge casinos and two championship golf courses. They were also pretty clannish and didn’t like outsiders

coming in and telling them how to design and implement a land use program, and 75 percent of them didn’t speak English,” Owen recalled. But he made friends with the tribal chief who cared more about what he could do than where he was from. He spent many nights in community meetings with an interpreter translating his smart growth and new urbanism concepts and how they could benefit the tribe.

“It took seven years but by the time I left, the council had approved the first smart growth plan for the area adopted by any tribe in the nation,” he said.

Today, under his stewardship, 1,600 acres of the property is available for development. Chaffee Crossing, parcels of which are located in the cities of Fort Smith and Barling and Sebastian County, now hosts



The Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority donated 200 acres to the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education for a new medical college opening in August 2017. Photo provided by the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority.



(1) From left, Ivy Owen, U.S. Rep. Steve Womack (R-Ark.) and U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) discuss the ongoing development of Interstate 49, when Shuster, the chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, visited the area in 2014. Owen is a strong advocate for completion of I-49, which he says is key to further economic development of western Arkansas. (2) Mike Preston, executive director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, left, talks with Owen at the 2015 opening of ArcBest's corporate headquarters at Chaffee Crossing. (3) ArcBest, photographed in May 2017, is one of 15 companies and agencies with headquarters at Chaffee Crossing. Inset: The ArcBest facilities during construction. Photos provided by the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority.

15 company and government agency headquarters, including transportation and logistics giant ArcBest, handgun and air rifle manufacturers Walther Arms and Umarex USA, and pet food manufacturer Mars PetCare, to name a few. The community also has satellite classrooms for two universities, a future Montessori school, a veterinary hospital, several churches and the campus of the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine, which will open in August on 200 acres of land donated by the redevelopment authority. There also are three shopping centers and 24 residential developments that can accommodate 2,300 single- and multi-family units, recreation and a historic district, which includes a military museum.

To support this development, the redevelopment authority has funded the construction of miles of streets and water, sewer and utility lines, worked to ensure a segment of Interstate 49 that runs through Chaffee Crossing and Owen continues to seek federal and state funding for \$2.5 billion in funding to complete a segment of the highway that would run 180 miles from Chaffee Crossing to Texarkana on the Arkansas-Texas border.

Through its efforts, the authority has attracted more than \$1.45 billion in capital improvements, created more than 3,500 jobs and pumped more than \$100 million annually into the local economy.

Owen and his team also found an innovative solution to dealing with the damage caused by a 2008 fire that burned 150 historic barracks in 2008, but missed the building where Elvis Presley got his first military haircut 50 years earlier. They obtained a cleanup license that allowed them to use an asbestos-removal process approved by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, rather than one certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In so doing, they saved FCRA and local residents thousands of dollars.

In recognition of the authority's accomplishments, the Association of Defense Communities honored Chaffee Crossing with the John Lynch Base Redevelopment Excellence Award in 2016 and the Base Redevelopment Excellence Award in 2012.

This success betrays the fact that the first few years on the job weren't easy. It didn't take Owen long to realize that he would have to be an innovative and flexible planner, a well-connected networker and marketer, and a highly accessible and persuasive emissary for Chaffee Crossing. This combination of traits would help him convince businesses to locate there and overcome local resistance to some aspects of the project.

Judith Hansen, executive editor of the *Southwest Times Record* newspaper for 22 years, watched with admiration as Owen transformed the shuttered Army post.

"Everyone wondered whether Ivy would be able to pull it off, but he's been there the longest and done the most with it," Hansen noted. "Before he arrived, the land was so open and empty, I used to give my kids driving lessons out there. Now, there's manufacturing, light industry, retail, restaurants, housing, schools and nonprofits—and there's still so much building going on that, as Ivy will say, 'If you haven't been to Chaffee Crossing this week, it's as though you hadn't been there.' I don't know where folks are taking their kids for driving lessons now."

But Owen didn't invite all comers; he focused on courting the type of investment in Chaffee Crossing that would be acceptable to the communities surrounding it, Hansen pointed out.

"Ivy could have allowed the land to be exploited for less clean types of manufacturing than what's being done there now or focused on just one type of development. Some local developers could have gotten in there and pushed through projects that benefited them alone. And there were those who wanted no development—to keep the land wild—while others pushed for all of it to be commercially developed," she said. "But he sought a variety of perspectives and was willing to consider different options that would benefit people throughout the region, not just Fort Smith. He also had the patience to wait for the right opportunities to come along rather than just jumping into projects that wouldn't be the right fit."

Owen's dogged approach to all things Chaffee Crossing has not gone unnoticed in other circles.

"Ivy quickly became familiar with the assets in this region and forged relationships with officials in the local towns and the state agencies and legislature to obtain the necessary funding for basic infrastructure projects," said Judge David Hudson, the chief executive officer of Sebastian County.

"In addition to encouraging enterprises to settle here, thus providing local jobs, he ensured there was space for neighborhood subdivisions and set aside 40 acres to add to the regional park, and developed a partnership to build bike and running trails, making Chaffee Crossing a desirable place to live as well as to work," he added.

But Owen is not one to rest on his laurels. The redevelopment authority's board of trustees recently extended his contract through the end of 2018 and he's still hard at work, seeking funding for the completion of I-49 and on improvements to regional river, rail and airport services.

"There are also a lot of leaky sewer and water lines dating back to the Fort Chaffee days that need to be replaced. Fort Smith has an Arkansas Air National Guard base that pilots unmanned aircraft and 65,000 acres of Fort Chaffee that is an Arkansas Army National Guard Joint Maneuver Training Facility. We'd like to get a manufacturer or a supplier to locate at Chaffee Crossing so their products can be test flown out here. We're also hoping to attract medical equipment manufacturers or a medical R&D organization to support the medical school, which has set aside space on its campus for those types of activities," Owen said.

"You never want to be in a position where you can't provide support to a developer that wants to come to your area," he continued. "That's the only thing that would cause me to want to retire and I'd go out with my tail tucked and my head down. But I don't see that happening. The good thing is that when you're successful, people like to tag along." 📧

Ivy Owen has been recognized with the 2017 John Lynch Base Redevelopment Leadership Award.



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The Great Communicator



AETC commander ensures that airmen and defense communities understand and are equipped to support the Air Force's defense mission.

Lt. Gen. Darryl L. Roberson has flown combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, was a pilot for the Thunderbirds air demonstration team, and has commanded a squadron operations group, three wings and the 3rd Air Force/17th Expeditionary Air Force at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. He also served as a congressional fellow on Capitol Hill and served on the Air Staff and Joint Staff at the Pentagon, including a stint as vice director for operations.

These are just a few highlights of Roberson's service in the U.S. Air Force, which began with his graduation from the Air Force Academy in 1983.

Currently, Roberson commands the Air Education and Training Command (AETC) at Joint Base San Antonio, a position he has held since July 2015. In this role, he has overseen the recruitment of more than 31,000 new active-duty airmen in nine months. AETC also was instrumental over the past year in ensuring the initial operational capability of the F-35 Lightning II by training pilots and support crew to fly and maintain this new fighter aircraft. In addition, AETC doubled the number of pilots trained to operate remotely piloted aircraft each year from 192 to 384 and, for the first time, has begun providing this training for enlisted pilots.

Finally, under Roberson's leadership, the Air Force continues to provide training to active-duty Air Force personnel through the Profession of Arms Center of Excellence, which is committed to developing Air Force personnel with a professional mindset, character and core values required to succeed.

All of these activities are in keeping with his 2016 AETC Strategic Plan, which focuses on four areas: motivational

mission accomplishment; compassionate care of airmen and their families; innovation; and leadership.

ADC President Michael Cooper selected Roberson to receive this year's President's Award not only for his most recent accomplishments but for his career-long efforts to communicate and collaborate with defense communities to ensure the Air Force's operational ability to carry out its mission. Cooper, who as chairman of the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission and the city of Enid's military liaison, regularly worked with the general, praised Roberson for his commitment to engaging with states, local communities and base commanders to educate them on key issues Air Force installations face and how civilian supporters can help them meet their missions.

"Gen. Roberson has been upfront and transparent about Air Force bases' needs for adequate air space, the usefulness of P3 and P4 partnerships, the importance of finding ways to work with communities to reuse excess base capacity, and budget issues," said Cooper.

"The willingness of a three-star to explain to this audience the issues they should care about and ways that we can work together to get things done—a message a lot of commanders leave to someone else to deliver—has huge impact," he added.

"It is an honor to accept this award from the Association of Defense Communities," said Roberson. "It reflects AETC's full commitment to fostering and nourishing vibrant relationships between our military and local communities. These successful partnerships help sustain Air Force operations while supporting community economic goals and interests. The relationship is truly symbiotic. Airpower starts in AETC and we could not do it alone." 🇺🇸



Lt. Gen. Darryl L. Roberson, commander, Air Education and Training Command, meets Senior Master Sgt. Kenneth Aubut, 173rd Civil Engineer Squadron, while touring the squadron at Kingsley Field, Ore., July 7, 2016. U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Penny Snoozy.



Col. Jeff Smith, 173rd Fighter Wing commander, left, and Lt. Gen. Darryl L. Roberson, commander, Air Education and Training Command, prepare for an F-15 Eagle flight at Kingsley Field, Ore., July 6, 2016. U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Penny Snoozy.

What Lies Ahead for Communities of Yesterday and Today



Michael Cooper has served as president of the Association of Defense Communities from 2014 to 2017.

By Michael Cooper
Chairman, Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission

When we celebrate communities and individuals across the country that are doing remarkable things, we are celebrating the resolve that has made the United States military so powerful for centuries. This year's class of Great American Defense Communities happens to include some of our nation's earliest defense communities. But even as we honor their great history, we realize the work that faces us in those areas and in all of our defense communities.

Our defense communities also are at the ready to help rebuild our nation's defense infrastructure, strengthen our readiness and support economic growth through job creation.

For more than five years, turmoil for our nation's defense budget has damaged the military, readiness and installations. Elected officials, business leaders, installation commanders, engaged civilians and private sector partners in communities all across our country have an important on-the-ground perspective of how to help.

Rebuilding our military's readiness means rebuilding our defense infrastructure. We need to reinvest in the basic components of our military installations—roads, airfields, buildings and utilities. We need to enhance the resiliency of our installations and protect the land and air space of our training ranges and facilities for current and future missions. We also need to ensure we are providing great places for our service members and their families to live, work and learn.

All of these investments must be driven not only by strategy, but also by innovation that ensures we are doing things smarter and more efficiently. Partnerships with the private and public sectors are critical to achieving this goal, and these partners stand ready to make it happen.

When the Air Force needed to increase mission capability and reduce costs, for example, the state of Oklahoma and the city of Enid came together to expand the municipal airport facilities and runway to serve Vance Air Force Base. Across the country, there are countless examples of such partnerships that are saving money and making life better on both sides of the fence.

And we must not forget our nation's former defense infrastructure, the hundreds of military bases in every part of the country that were closed and realigned through the BRAC process and offer the potential for job creation. Many sit fallow as they wait for the government to transfer land or address environmental issues. We should leverage the full power of the federal government to turn these unique sites into robust engines of economic growth.

As president of ADC over the past three years, I have had the chance to talk with policymakers, community leaders, service members, small business owners and many others who are proud of our military services and the communities they call home. I am proud of the work we do together and of how we will tackle what lies ahead.

When our defense is strong and our communities are strong, our country is strong. 🇺🇸

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What we do

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— Theodore Roosevelt. Speech in New York, September 7, 1903

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