

Messenger

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 32, NO. 3

Total Fitness

- ✓ **Cognitive** - knowledge, application, analysis
- ✓ **Affective** - attitude, identification, internalization
- ✓ **Psychomotor** - physical ability, coordination, adaptation



Medical Processing



Messenger

Sharing information to reach a vision



Columbus MEPS joins third largest national race
 Thomas Jefferson poses for a photo while donning a pink wig in honor of Heather Pick, a Columbus television anchorwoman and spokeswoman for breast cancer awareness. Jefferson, a test control technician, was part of the MEPS' 'Team Columbus,' that joined more than 50,000 others to take part in the city's Race for the Cure. The Columbus event, third largest in the nation, raised more than \$2.5 million. Another MEPS team joined in with 17,000 others in the Atlanta Race for the Cure. *Stories begin on page 28.*

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U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

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Commander's Commentary

We are about to embark on an exciting, challenging venture.

As most of you know, the Department of Defense has selected a vendor — CACI — for VIPS Increment 1.0. This is the first step in our long-awaited modernization for processing applicants, and moves us closer to realizing our ultimate goal of anytime, anywhere processing.

The initial steps in our transformation will enhance the command's ability to process and enlist qualified applicants into the armed forces. Among other things, it will allow recruiters to capture positive identification information on applicants from their stations or at first contact.

Electronic fingerprints and digital photographs will be used to identify applicants throughout the enlistment process, including testing, processing, medical examinations and, ultimately, enlistment.

By selecting the vendor, we now have a solid timeline for

implementing VIPS at our MEPS. This vital first step will set us on a path to eventually deliver most, if not all, necessary documents to the services' reception and training centers via electronic data exchange.

There will be challenges as we progress. Change is never easy and rarely progresses on a direct path. Flexibility will be key, adapting will be the norm and overcoming adversity will be required to achieve success.

It has often been said that change is the only constant. As we transition to a new way of serving our customers, I offer the words of author C.S. Lewis: "It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad."

It is our time to "hatch." We must emerge from our shells and learn to fly. Time and again, I

have seen your ability to rise to any challenge and continue the excellence and dedication that allows USMEPCOM to maintain its reputation as a "future-focused" organization.

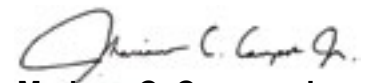
As we move forward, there is no time for looking over our shoulders, pining for the "good old days," or uttering the last six words of any great organization — "We've never done it that way." Just like hatchlings, you will learn to "fly," perhaps awkwardly at first, but in time you will learn to soar.

I have seen your amazing ability to do all these things and I am confident that you will exceed all expectations as you learn new ways of performing our mission.

The first increment is projected to be completed during the first quarter of fiscal year 2012. Later phases will modernize how we do physicals, capture medical data and store enlistment records.

As we proceed with these important changes, I know I can rely on each of you to continue to provide the stellar service that is your benchmark every day. Your customer focus and participation will ensure a smooth transition as we move forward. We will encounter many challenges and opportunities in implementing VIPS, but I am sure you will excel as we strive to maintain the high standards needed to support recruiters who locate those with an interest in military, applicants with a great desire to serve, the reception and training centers who transform these fine young Americans into service members, and ultimately the American taxpayers.

A new day awaits. Take to the skies and soar.



Mariano C. Campos Jr.
Colonel, USAF
Commanding



Col. Mariano C. Campos Jr. records a message about Virtual Interactive Processing System Increment 1.0, and its impact on military processing.

Medical military processing

— *contributing to a quality future force*

By Christine Parker
Messenger Editor

When establishing and maintaining a weapons system – humans are more valuable than hardware. That’s why the Department of Defense is placing greater emphasis on the “total fitness” of its military force, and, like never before, USMEPCOM is realizing the importance of its medical processing mission.

“We’re providing a specific part of a weapons system – the human part – and if it doesn’t work, you’ve got a problem,” USMEPCOM Command Surgeon, Col. (Dr.) Raymond Watters said. “It’s an honorable mission and we take it seriously.”

The background, from a wider perspective

In the past few years, military leaders began using words like, “human performance optimization,” “resilience,” “wellness,” “readiness,” and “total fitness.” In order to understand DOD’s outlook on the physical and mental fitness of the nation’s military, it’s important to understand the meaning of these terms and where they originate.

The Office of Net Assessment is DOD’s internal “think tank.” In 2005, ONA released a report on human performance optimization, which led DOD Health Affairs to request the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to host a conference on the subject.



Department of Defense photo by Timothy L. Hale, U.S. Army

In June 2006, USU hosted that conference, entitled, “Human Performance Optimization in the Department of Defense: Charting a Course for the Future.” Eighty-nine attendees from 56 DOD organizations were there

and began developing a strategic plan for DOD human performance optimization.

In other words, they set out to find ways to enhance mental and physical resilience of warfighters, accelerate recovery, reduce injury and illness, provide seamless knowledge transfer from laboratory to line, and improve the human system contribution to mission success.

The effort has continued since then and, in December 2009, health experts from USU, the Consortium for Health and Military Performance, and other organizations attended a conference entitled, “Defining Total Fitness for the 21st Century.” Their work was set to form the foundation for a Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Instruction on Total Fitness.

As a representative of USMEPCOM, Watters attended the conference. There, they discussed concepts integral to total fitness: in particular, resilience and human performance optimization. They talked about a new paradigm of fitness that involves the mind and body, across the domains of military life: spiritual, psychological, behavioral, social, physical, nutritional, medical and environmental.

Also, these medical professionals discussed the concept of military resilience, defining it not as “hardness,” but as “hardiness.” They described resilient warfighters as able to adapt to new, stressful situations; able to cope with new challenges; able to solve difficult problems in life; with a key component of “flexibility.”

At the December conference, CHAMP proposed defining total fitness as, “a state or condition, in which a warfighter possesses sufficient mental and physical resources to successfully adapt to different and often changing environments, stressors, and demands, where success is defined as survival, effectiveness and growth. And, they proposed defining resilience as, “the capacity of a warfighter to withstand or recover from performance decrements in the face of stressors.”

Along those same lines, in August, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen wrote, “‘Fitness’ is a commonly used word in our society today but within the military it has a particularly deep meaning. Conventionally, being fit means being adapted to a particular condition or circumstance. In war, militaries and their individual combatants must adapt to the chaos



Department of Defense photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle D. Gahlau, U.S. Navy.

and complexities of battle. As these militaries return from war, they must maintain a state of vigilance while also peacefully coexisting within the civil society that produced them. Their fitness is not just something that is merely physical; it is holistic.”

It’s becoming obvious that military leaders are building a completely new model of “total fitness.” And, with this new direction, USMEPCOM will develop medical military processing along those lines.

How military medical processing fits in the big picture

The Department of Defense sets the medical standards for appointment, enlistment or induction in the military services in DOD Instruction 6130.03, last published on April 28. This 47-page document covers subjects that range from eyes and ears to “miscellaneous conditions of the extremities.”

The people who interpret and apply these standards to military medical processing includes 65 military entrance processing station chief medical officers and medical specialists, a variety of fee-basis providers, and about a dozen headquarters medical personnel.

In order to adapt and improve, the Medical Directorate at USMEPCOM Headquarters has been changing by leaps and bounds in the past two years (see story on page 8). The changes have not only allowed the staff to improve their support to MEPS, but to study improvements to aspects of medical processing, such as the ortho-neuro and mental health screenings, and investigate future issues like the transformation to the Virtual Interactive Processing System.

Ortho-neuro screening

The ortho-neuro screening has been part of military processing since the early 1900s. “We’re looking at doing more provocative testing for range of motion – strength, balance – and we’re going to test people using protocols that are more applicable to the actual military jobs they will be performing,” Col. (Dr.) Robert Ruiz, deputy command surgeon, said. “So it will be more occupationally based.”



Military applicants perform a part of the ortho-neuro screening, commonly known as the ‘duck walk.’ Photo by Art Heintz

“They use the word, ‘functional’ to capture all of that – functional analysis, assessment,” Lt. Col. (Dr.) William “Scott” Deitche, Clinical Operations Division chief said. “It’s highly applicable, as opposed to being generic. It’s very prescriptive for tactical issues [that is, it matches up with military specialties].”

The USU is studying an improved ortho-neuro screening process, which has been successfully tested on Marine officer training candidates at Quantico, Va. The command recently received a proposal for a design for a contracted study that will take place in two MEPS. The USU and Col. (Dr.) Francis G. O’Connor will oversee the study. O’Connor is the medical director for CHAMP, an

associate professor at USU, and has been a leader in sports medicine education and research for the military for more than 15 years.

“We hope to accomplish a much more objective way of conducting the ortho-neuro screening,” Watters said. “We’re combining functional testing and force plate technology. We want objective data that’s reproducible. Right now, we probably stand the closest we have ever stood to actually being able to do that.”

“Not only will this be good for us, but it will be good for the services as well.” Watters explained that these studies will help the military services not only assess people for military service, but capture and study data on an individual at the moment of injury, post-operatively, as healing progresses, and when they have reached maximum healing and recovery.

The data will enable medical professionals to look at specific types of injuries and determine the deficits that occur over time. “Then, when you put the deficit against an occupation – now you’re looking at it objectively – and you stand a much better chance of getting the right fit,” Watters said.

“This type of examining takes our physical and our physical assessments to a new level – a level of which we can be proud – a level that we can honestly say is truly giving us the information we need,” Watters said.

“It’s very cutting edge,” Deitche said. “It’s exciting to see that level of academic medicine adding to the refinement of processing.”

Deitche arrived at USMEPCOM in early September. In his last assignment he worked on medical evaluation boards at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Hood, Texas. His medical background is primarily in family and sports medicine.

Ruiz mentioned a change in direction in the selection process as well. “When we speak about the right fit, it’s a fundamental change in the way you look at qualification. Instead of a “select out,” which is what we currently do, we will “se-

lect in,” by providing a functional assessment of a range of capabilities and assign them appropriately to jobs as selecting criteria.

Mental health screening

With the higher operational tempo and longer and more frequent deployments of the last nine years, DOD has been studying and stressing the importance of mental health issues as an integral part of total fitness. “One of the great byproducts of all this is an awareness that it’s something we have to take very seriously,” Watters said.

“We’ve always realized this. However, now, there’s a paradigm shift. And there’s an awareness that it’s a continuing process.

“We are working on the [mental health screening] forms,” Watters said. “We are looking at changing the way we ask questions about prior mental health issues.” At the time of the interview, Watters traveled to Washington, D.C., on Sept. 30, regarding this issue.

Ruiz added, “There is a notion that hardening or resiliency training could begin when applicants are at the MEPS.” Currently DOD is looking for ways to assess people early on, which, someday, may begin at MEPS.

Lifecycle

In addition to studying changes related to the ortho-neuro exam and mental health screening, DOD is looking at the concept of total fitness throughout a service member’s “lifecycle.” This would involve connecting health-related records and data from the beginning to the end of a service members’ career. It would establish a line of data about accession, training, deployment, retention, disability, etc.

“That’s what they’re talking about – they want to go lifecycle, and bend the stovepipes,” Annette Waddelow said. Specifically, they are talking about one DOD group looking at medical standards throughout the lifecycle.”

Waddelow is the Medical Directorate deputy director and Quality Division chief. Both Watters and Waddelow attended an Accession Medical Standards Working Group, or AMSWG meeting, in Washington, recently. The group reviews accession medical policy issues.

“We’ve got to expand our involvement, so our accession data gets carried over. In the long term, it’s good for the whole system. That’s what’s coming and we’re going to need to be involved,” she said.

Flexibility, quality and improvement

These initiatives may involve changes in USMEPCOM. “There are challenges out there and they underscore the requirement that we become more flexible in both our business processes and our product,” Ruiz said.

Besides the needs of DOD, “I believe we need to look at the needs of the stakeholders, recruiting commands and training centers,” Waddelow said. “What can we do to improve the accession process to support our stakeholders and the warfighters down the road?”

Ruiz clarified the difference between stakeholders and customers. “Stakeholders are involved in a common enterprise – that would be recruiting and training. The customer is actually the consumer of the product which we acquire. We’re acquiring a part to a weapons system – the human part – and the consumers of that part are the wings, divisions, fleets, and training centers.

“In order to be responsible to customer’s needs, we’re looking for feedback from them. This will give us the direction in which the command needs to go,” Ruiz said.

“The ultimate consumer is national security,” Deitche said

“We need to do a better job of informing those commanders, instructing the commanders, spreading the word of USMEPCOM and how we process applicants – what our business is about – and receive their feedback,” Ruiz said. “That would further the mission.”

Waddelow explained that the collection of data, feedback and analysis would follow the service member throughout their careers. It would include data on training success, “deployability,” conditions that existed prior to service, sick call statistics, etc.

“What a concept to have brigade surgeons giving USMEPCOM feedback on what they’re seeing out in the war zone,” Waddelow said. “That kind of feedback, we don’t get that right now. Eventually we’d like to get to the point where we can analyze that data as well.”

Virtual processing

Now that USMEPCOM has a vendor for the Virtual Interactive Processing System, the system is on its way. Although VIPS 1.0 will bring changes, the largest chunk of changes in the medical arena will take place in VIPS 2.0.

“VIPS is defining the direction in which we need to go. It kick starts us in the right direction,” Watters said. However, he added that the command will need to “tweak” it along the way.

“The mission is going to remain the same – I don’t see that changing,” he said. He explained that the command will change the way it determines those who are best qualified. “And it has to be done very carefully,” Watters said.

“VIPS is a journey, not a destination,” Ruiz said. “VIPS is a tool to get you there, but in order for this to be successful, there has to be a cultural change. It will take considerable vision and the ability to relay that vision to people and have them capture that idea before this will be successful.”

Deitche, with less than a month at the command, said he’s seeing a unique flavor of transformation and change. “It’s good to see this and it will be interesting to be a part of the process of transformation.”

When Watters attended the total fitness conference last December, during a question-and-answer session with the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Watters asked Mullen, “Sir, how do you see accessions feeding into the concept of total fitness?” and Mullen replied, ‘I see it as an integral part of what we do.’

“If you look back at the past 75 to 100 years of MEPS medicine, I truly believe this is going to be a paradigm shift for us,” Watters said.

Photo by Art Heintz



Directorate reorganizes to better support medical processing

By Christine Parker
Messenger Editor

As the command reshapes its Medical Directorate, related improvements are ongoing – increased responsiveness to requests for assistance related to MEPS medical processing, resource effectiveness and efficiencies, and the ability to prepare for the future.

Although the directorate has a history of receiving favorable evaluations from MEPS, the reorganization is enhancing its responsiveness to inquiries related to medical processing. “You can always improve, so we’ve put MEPS support at the top of our list,” Annette Waddelow, Medical Directorate deputy director said. “We will maintain this focus and expand our systems over time.”

Likewise, the directorate is improving its response to MEPCOM Operations Center, or MOC, tickets. They’ve even added categories for tickets related to fee-basis providers and HIV and DAT testing. “We’ve made a deliberate attempt to get everyone in the office involved in the MOC ticket system,” Waddelow said.

Further, in order to ensure consistency and equality in implementing Department of Defense medical processing policies, the reorganization included transferring

two sector physician positions, two medical management analyst positions, and their related medical functions to the headquarters. The sector medical functions included day-to-day support to MEPS, chief medical officer recertification visits, medical staff assistance visits and medical initial training visits.

The directorate has two deputies now – one with dual responsibilities of deputy command surgeon and Clinical Operations Division chief, and the other of deputy director and Quality Division chief.

The deputy command surgeon directs the inherently clinical aspects of the medical program. This includes medical examination policy, applicant examination/result decisions, and special programs and projects. The other deputy/Quality Division chief directs the inherently non-clinical aspects of the program. This includes medical-related transformation initiatives, quality assessment and continuous improvement programs, information technology requirements and user testing, the budget, contract management, and credentials policy.

These changes are allowing headquarters physicians to use their time as effectively as possible. “Doctors are a scarce and expensive resource,” Waddelow said. “That was part of the starting point. Especially before the

reorganization, they were spread too thin. There was too much on their plates, so things weren't getting done. The reorganization has allowed the directorate to "focus that scarce, expensive doctor resource where they're needed most."

With a precise clarification of staff responsibilities, and the addition of personnel, both workload and accomplishments have increased. Recently the medical staff updated and published USMEPCOM Regulations 40-1 and 40-8, and various training guides. They provide unified support for staff assistance visits, information technology testing, Inspector General visits, and deployments, e.g., to places like Guam and Saipan (see related article on page 17).

Additionally, the medical staff is providing improved day-to-day support for MEPS contract issues and ensuring contract management requirements are met. They've raised fee-basis provider fill rates, and are ensuring the successful reconciliation of invoices before committing funds.

In addition to supporting the field, the reorganization will help the directorate support headquarters, as well. Before the changes, at times, headquarters staff didn't know whom to contact within the medical directorate. "There's actually a logical path behind the reorganization," Waddelow said. Part of that logic is something she refers to as "hook and bridges," i.e., specific staff members who translate medical-related requirements to other directorates. For example, the Quality Operations Branch bridges to both the Office of Strategic Planning and Transformation and the Information Technology Directorate, and the Quality Management Branch bridges to Resource Management.

Headquarters staff

Col. (Dr.) Raymond Watters is the USMEPCOM command surgeon and medical director. The command surgeon provides leadership, establishes medical policy and monitors the command's medical examination program to ensure quality accessions. He is the chairman of the USMEPCOM Credentials Committee, a group that grants credentials to MEPS physicians, physician assistants and certified nurse practitioners to conduct physicals as fee-basis providers. The command surgeon ensures these health care professionals receive appropriate training.

In addition to his responsibilities within the command, the command

surgeon represents the command on a national level. "There's the 'up and out' and then there's the 'downward' tactical-level support – we have to do it all – we support that whole gamut, so it's very challenging," Waddelow said.

Watters and the deputies do most of the "up and out" – traveling to meetings and conferences – to ensure other DOD agencies and commands are aware of and understand how USMEPCOM's medical mission fits into DOD's "big picture" (see story, page 4).

Because of the duality of Watters' role as director and command surgeon, the directorate needs two deputies. Col. (Dr.) Robert Ruiz has worked for the command, "on and off" since 2003. He was a sector command surgeon and, most recently, the deputy command surgeon and Clinical Division chief. In November, Ruiz finished his assignment, and left USMEPCOM. Lt. Col. (Dr.) William "Scott" Deitche is the current deputy command surgeon and Clinical Division chief.

In line with Waddelow's earlier explanation, the deputy command surgeon is mostly focused on the "downward, tactical level" support. In addition to the inherently clinical work, the deputy command surgeon establishes medical examination policy, makes applicant examination and result decisions, and works on special programs and projects.



A MEPS employee draws blood from an applicant. *Photo by Skip Wiseman*

HIV testing and DAT programs

Trent Brann is the HIV/DAT Program manager and provides day-to-day support with policies and issues related to these programs. Brann began working at the command in April. A new HIV testing contract went into effect Dec. 1.

An incoming Air Force master sergeant will assist Brann with the HIV/DAT Programs. The two will manage the MEPS medical equipment program as well.

Field support

The Medical Directorate has two field support branches. Dr. Beatrice Aguado is the branch chief for eastern MEPS and Dr. Anthony Lehner is the branch chief for western MEPS. Three medical management analysts assist Aguado; they are Robert Clayton, Lorene Roth, and Mary Walker. Two support Lehner – Ted Novaczyk and Derrick Scott (a third position is vacant).

The two doctors and six analysts respond to inquiries regarding medical processing. They clear up any ambiguity or conflicts with the service requirements found in DOD Instruction 6130.03.

Referring to the two doctors, “Their primary focus is day-to-day support of applicant processing,” Waddelow said. Whether it’s responding to a MOC ticket or discussing an applicant’s case, Aguado and Lehner’s responsibility is supporting the medical processing of applicants. Their “hands on” experience with daily processing plays an important role in policy making.

The analysts are focused on day-to-day medical processing as well. “They have a medical background and work directly for the docs,” Waddelow said.

“They have an awesome responsibility, because they are the first line of support to the MEPS and applicant processing. They’re constantly answering questions.”

Additionally they travel to MEPS to conduct initial training visits, staff assistance visits and they track trend analysis and recommend policy changes. Since the reorganization, the MMAs have written about 30 training guides. In addition to focusing on current operations, they must focus on future initiatives, like the Virtual Interactive Processing System, or VIPS.

Quality management

Originally the Quality Division was named Future Operations Administration Division. “That didn’t roll off people’s tongues very well, so we changed the name,” Waddelow said. As the deputy director and Quality Division chief, her duties cover a wide range of areas, including medical transformation initiatives, and medical assessment and continuous improvement programs and initiatives. She oversees medical-related information technology requirements determination and user testing, the medical budget, and contract management and credentials policy.

The Quality Operations Branch is the hook to the IT directorate. Michele Bittinger is a health systems specialist, who works in an analytical, assessment and continuous improvement position.

“We were very fortunate to hire someone with a hospital background,” Waddelow said. “She is involved in planning analysis — framing how we’re going to continuously improve the medical process over time.”

Luckie Dayton, a retired Navy medical technician, is a health systems specialist and lead for system integration testing and user acceptance testing for medical-related software. He represents the medical-related IT system users and represents the directorate when any software is field tested at MEPS. “He’s inundated right now,” Waddelow said. “There’s a lot going on.” The directorate will hire to fill one other medical-related IT position in this branch.

Al Fuerte, chief of the Quality Management Branch, and three others handle contract management and support, and the medical budget. Fuerte is a certified contract officer representative for both



A MEPS employee administers a vision exam to an applicant. *Photo by Art Heintz*

contracts. Quesha Winfield was and Lisa Surbrook is an alternate certified COR for the HIV/DAT Program contract. Joni Cole and Tina Cukierski are alternate CORs for the fee-basis contracts.

Cole, a management analyst, consolidates and validates fee-basis provider “fill rates” for the command. In preparation for every processing day, based on projections, USMEPCOM submits a government order to its vendor, delineating the number of fee-basis providers that MEPS will require. Per the contract, the vendor is required to fill the order at 98 percent command-wide.

“This all happens pretty fast,” Waddelow said of how the command ensures MEPS have enough staff to conduct physicals at 65 locations, each processing day. She stressed the importance of an accurate communication of fill rates. “This is a place where we can hold the vendor accountable for meeting our requirement. But, in order to do that, we have to have the numbers.

“The command could be above 98 percent, but if you’re at a MEPS that’s not getting providers, the fact that the command is at 98 percent is not helping you,” she said.

Cole’s monthly inspection reports highlight MEPS that are shorted three or more times. If this happens, the headquarters medical staff works with the vendor to identify and fix the problem.

“We’ve cleaned up a lot recently,” Waddelow said. “I always look at it as ‘we’re fighting for the MEPS,’ but we need MEPS data to help us fight the fight for them.”

Also, credentialing is a critical area. All MEPS have a chief medical officer and some have assistant CMOs. These physicians are government employees. Also, the command employs in-house consultants. The Medical Directorate manages the command’s Credentials Program.

Tina Cukierski, a management analyst assistant, manages a fee-basis application that tracks the credentials for more than 400 fee-basis providers. She is responsible for reconciling the invoices before tax dollars are committed. “Keeping the application going and working with the MEPS on this is a full-time job in and of itself,” Waddelow said.

Additionally, if and when a MEPS has an issue with a fee-basis provider, a medical staff member acts as a liaison between the MEPS and the vendor. Sometimes problems result from a lack of training and the command works with the vendor to fix the issue.

The vendor creates credentials packages for fee-basis providers, but MEPS create credentials packages for their CMOs and the in-house consultants and send them



A MEPS employee administers the drug and alcohol test. Photo by Skip Wiseman

to headquarters. Until she recently returned to her home state of California, Quesha Winfield was a management analyst assistant and the command’s physician credentials coordinator. In this position, she researched and responded to questions about credentials, and reviewed and validated the credentials packages for CMOs and in-house consultants. “She made sure the packages were as perfect as possible, again, under this philosophy of doing the leg work for the doctors.

Change worthwhile, necessary

At some point, every part of the medical mission could require input from a physician. “When push comes to shove, you’ve got to have that capacity,” Waddelow said. And that’s why the reorganization “offloaded as much as possible, to free up that capacity — when we need ‘doctor input’ — we have that capacity.”

And this “capacity,” afforded by the reorganization, is improving the directorate’s support of the command’s medical mission. “When you talk about what we do from a medical perspective, all of these applicants are individuals. You write standards as a benchmark, but when you talk about applicants, every one has their own individualized story, their own medical history. So, to me, we are humanizing and individualizing the exam process, because there’s always that little nuance to what’s going on with a particular person.

“So part of the service we’re providing is taking that individual look for a citizen who wants to serve their country, saying their “story” meets the intent of the DOD standards and they are qualified to serve their country,” Waddelow said. “I think that’s an awesome thing.”

Headquarters Medical Team

The USMEPCOM Medical Directorate has changed quite a bit in the last two years, so it's fitting to introduce the current team — some who have been there for years and others for months. Pages 12 to 16 highlight 10 Medical Directorate employees, and six more are featured in the Profiles section that begins on page 18.

Trent Brann HIV/DAT Program Manager

Hometown: Niles, Michigan

Military service: He is currently a major in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Service Corp. He's been in the Reserve for 20 years.

At USMEPCOM since: April 2010

Background: He has more than 15 years of experience in the administrative medical field; 10 years in blood banking, dealing with communicable diseases.

Last position: *"I was mobilized at Fort Sheridan, Ill., for one year. Prior to my mobilization, I was employed by Concentra Occupational Health Clinics as the director of operations of offsite programs."*

Primary duties: *"I manage the USMEPCOM Drug and Alcohol Testing Program and HIV Testing Program. I provide proper oversight of administering the DAT/HIV program, based on Title 10, USC Section 978, and the Department of Defense policy on HIV screening of all armed forces personnel."*

Supports mission: By providing support for, guidance on and ensuring adherence to USMEPCOM's DAT and HIV Programs.

Greatest current challenges: *"Oversight of the HIV Program and MEPS proper notification of positive/indeterminate testing of applicants."*

Philosophy/motto: *"Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and*



you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream."
—Unknown author



Luckie J. Dayton II Health System Specialist, Lead Software Tester

Hometown: Glen Burnie, Md.

Military service: He served in the U.S. Navy as a hospital corpsman from June 1971 to April 1992.

At USMEPCOM since: February 1999

Other command positions: He's also worked in J-3, Operations, and J-6, Information Technology, at Headquarters.

Last position: Customer service representative, Military Medical Support Office.

Primary duties: Develop test plans, test cases and execute test cases for software developed for USMIRS, and any other projects that affect processing applicants at MEPS.

Regina “Dee Dee” Bianchi Administrative Assistant

Hometown: Tacoma, Wash., but my heart is in Rapid City, S.D.

Military service: She didn't serve in the military but she was a military spouse for the 21 years her husband was on active duty in the Air Force, from 1973 to 1994. She's worked for the Air Force and the Army for a total of 25 years.

At USMEPCOM since: August 2009

Background: She's been doing this kind of work since she was 15!

Last position: She worked for U.S. Army Recruiting Command in a medical recruiting station in Milwaukee, Wis., as a (military)

human resources assistant. She input data into the database for anyone applying for a commission in the Army in the medical field, as well as doing sex offender checks, verifying credentials, including licenses, degrees, internships, residencies, malpractice insurance, etc.

Primary duties: Creating temporary duty orders; making hotel, airline, rental car, and limousine reservations; typing various documents; managing the director's calendar; reviewing regulations for compliance with command standards; supply point of contact and “other tasks as assigned.”

Supports mission: *“I relieve the command surgeon and other directorate staff of the mundane day-to-day office stuff so they can concentrate on other things. I also ensure that travelers get to their destination(s) in the timeliest, most*



cost-effective manner possible, thus saving TDY funds.”

Command's greatest current challenges: The Virtual Interactive Processing System and the HIV contract.

Robert Clayton Medical Management Analyst, Field Support Branch East

Hometown: Hawthorne, Calif.

Military service: *“In 2003, after 20 years, I retired from the Air Force. My specialty was medical technician with a special identifier as an independent duty medical technician.”*

At USMEPCOM since: 2000

Other command positions: *“I worked in Eastern Sector as a medical analyst, until the command reorganized the Medical Directorate/J-7.”*

Background: *“I spent my last three years in the Air Force as the medical NCOIC, Eastern Sector Operations, prior to starting my civilian career.”*

Primary duties: He conducts staff assistance visits and individual training visits. He independently trains newly arrived personnel and



conducts additional training when requested. He ensures MEPS are conducting applicant processing by adhering to Department of Defense and USMEPCOM standards. He answers service desk questions through the MEPCOM Operations Center. He is working with the Office of Strategic Planning and Transformation on Virtual Interactive Processing System medical processing initiatives.

He reviews and updates medical processing regulations 40-1 and 40-8, as needed.

Supports mission: *“Every applicant must be medically qualified for military service and J-7 supports that requirement. Providing support through training, updating regulations or policy implementation, and quality service to the MEPS.”*

Command's greatest current challenges: *“The biggest challenge in our current environment is finding, training, and retaining outstanding medical personnel to include our fee-basis physician pool who work under contract. The future holds the challenge of implementing VIPS, since we don't know what it will look like.”*

Philosophy/motto: *“If it needs to be done, do it; don't wait for someone else!”*

Thoughts: *“Everyone's job is important and we need to remember who we support, and work as a team to get the job done. We all succeed or fail as a command, not individuals.”*

Ted Novaczyk Medical Management Analyst, Field Support Branch West

Hometown: “Sweet Home Chicago!”

Military service: “I retired from active duty Navy after 24 years of service as a chief hospital corpsman (fleet marine force).”

At USMEPCOM since: “The first time was at Chicago MEPS from 1991-1995, then returned back to the Chicago MEPS from 1998 to 2001. I retired and then worked at Chicago MEPS as a health tech supervisor for five years. Next I worked as the Western Sector medical management analyst from 2006 to 2008, when J-7 reorganized.”

Background: “It was a privilege to have worked 12 years at the “grass roots level of applicant processing,” in one of the largest MEPS in the nation. By having this knowledge, I am able to bring a better understanding of actual processes that occur in the medical section, and that brings vital knowledge for future medical processing decisions.”

Last positions: “Between MEPS duties, I was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment as the battalion aid station chief-in-charge. I trained and mentored my medical team (48 corpsman) that won 1996 Corpsman Cups, Western Pacific Rim.”

Primary duties: “I serve as subject matter expert in MEPS medical processing. I conduct staff assistance visits, train new medical NCOIC / health tech supervisor, conduct medical analysis, disseminate trend studies of medical processes, provide daily customer support, oversee College of American Pathology / Clinical Laboratory Improvement Program, and effectively and efficiently manage the medical mission essential training lists.”

Supports mission: “As subject matter expert, I provide prompt answers to an array of questions (applicant processing, services established standards, supply issues, medical equipment, etc.) that assist MEPS in ensuring only qualified applicants are accessing into the armed forces.”

Command’s greatest current challenges: “Preparing for tomorrow – Virtual Interactive Processing System – is what our



challenge is today. As in past years, this too will be achieved with all the knowledgeable medical health tech supervisor / NCOIC assistance, and with the properly chartered course, I am confident that our command will meet this challenge once again.”

Philosophy/motto: “My customer is most important to me; ‘Results, not excuses!’”

Thoughts: “I live and die with my Chicago Bears and Chicago Cubs. Most importantly, what we all do in USMEPCOM is all about the warriors who defend the “red, white and blue.”



Derrick Scott Medical Management Analyst, Field Support Branch West

Hometown: Chicago

Military service: Scott served in the Army, and retired after 20 years of service, in November 2005.

At USMEPCOM since: July 2002

Other command positions: He’s been in the Medical Directorate since he arrived. He’s worked as the credential coordinator, HIV/DAT program manager and MEPCOM Operations Center controller.

Primary duties: “As medical management analysts, we provide assistance to the MEPS with help tickets, via MOC, on any situation that may arise in a MEPS medical section. We also conduct MEPS visits to ensure they are conducting processing up to standards and prescribed in our regulations. When needed, we update regulations or provide additional guidance via information messages.”

Supports mission: “By providing guidance and support to the field.”

Philosophy/motto: “One Band One Sound!”

Lorene Roth Medical Management Analyst, Field Support Branch East

Hometown: Hammond, Ind.

Military service: After 20 years, she retired as a Navy hospital corpsman first class, in 2006.

At USMEPCOM since: 2001

Background: *"I worked in Eastern Sector from 2001 to 2006 as the medical operations NCO. The position required traveling to the MEPS to teach and inspect MEPS on medical processing. Coming into the sector position with no MEPS experience showed me the steep learning curve that the MEPS medical NCOICs go through when they arrive. I have always kept that in my mind when a new technician or NCOIC calls, e-mails,*



or submits a MEPCOM Operations Center ticket. I worked with J-7 on physician credentials packets, issues with the HIV/DAT Programs, and other issues that needed attention when my sector surgeon was not reachable. Also, I spent off-duty time

completing my associate degree in Medical Science Technology and a medical coding certificate."

Primary duties: Staff assistance visits, individual training visits, answering MOC tickets, updating regulations and data analysis.

Supports mission: *"By ensuring the physical exam completed at the MEPS is done to DOD and USMEPCOM standards. I don't interact directly with the applicants, but the techs and NCOs with whom I communicate need my help when they have questions."*

Command's greatest current challenges: *"Preparing for the implementation of the Virtual Interactive Processing System; medical will see the most change in VIPS 2.0, but 1.0 starts the change."*

Philosophy or motto: *"Nothing special, just 'treat others as you want to be treated.'"*

Mary B. Walker Medical Management Analyst, Field Support Branch East

Hometown: Mobile, Ala.

Military service: She didn't serve in the military, but she is the widow of an active duty member.

Arrived at USMEPCOM: January 2009

Other command positions: She worked at Fort Jackson MEPS for 18 years as a medical technician (promoted to lead medical technician there, as well). Also, she worked as a supervisory medical technician at Chicago MEPS for two years.



Last position: Supervisory Health Technician, Chicago MEPS

Primary duties: *"To provide training and guidance to the field. Also,*

update regulations when needed and add other needed policies."

Work supports the mission: *"We help keep the field processing. If they have a problem, we possess great problem-solving skills."*

Command's greatest current challenges: *"Ensuring VIPS will equip the field with the tools needed to successfully process applicants."*

Philosophy/motto: *"Bring your 'A' game every day."*

Thoughts: *"I started working with the MEPS when we were using System 80. I was in the field when we supposedly upgraded to USMIRS. Now it is time for VIPS and my only concern is, 'will it provide the proper tools needed to help MEPS processing improve?'"*

Joni Cole Medical Management Analyst

Hometown: Killeen, Texas, but she grew up in Camp Darby, Italy.

Military service: *"I am an Army brat, and was an Army wife, so sometimes it feels as if I served too!"*

At USMEPCOM since: April 2008

Other command positions: She worked in Human Resources/J-1 as an editorial technician for about a year, and then in Resource Management/J-8 as a budget technician for three months.

Background: *"I have more than 20 years experience, mainly with the Army. The first thing I learned when I entered the federal service is to 'be flexible and adaptable,' which is a tool I used over and over again, as I moved and changed jobs, sometimes career fields, almost every two or three years. I learned to think and learn as a child, by keeping my mind like a 'sponge' ... always ready to absorb and learn new skills with an open mind, with no preconceived notions."*

Last position: *"Prior to my positions here at USMEPCOM, I worked in Public Affairs at Aberdeen*

Proving Ground, with the 20th Support Command (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosives).

Primary duties at USMEPCOM:

"I manage the fee-basis providers contract, with approximately 400 providers. I generate several reports linked to the contractor's performance. I'm the action officer in developing, coordinating and administering a policy to implement common access cards for contractor staff and FBPs. I'm part of the testing team for the FBP application phase III development effort. I'm also the primary logistics point of contact for the annual medical training conferences and the primary point of contact for the MEPS of Excellence Program, concerning the MEPS FBP fill-rate data."

Supports mission: *"My job directly impacts the processing mission, as processing of applicants would not be possible without physicians with valid credentials."*

Command's greatest current challenges:

"Trying to keep up to par with current technological changes within DOD. These challenges are common, not only to the Medical Directorate, but to USMEPCOM in general. There's technology that has been utilized by other services and other commands



for years that USMEPCOM still isn't fully utilizing. It's a cultural change in the way our staff sometimes seem to resist 'change.'"

Philosophy/motto? *"Always be ready and prepared to do all necessary for the accomplishment of our mission."*

Thoughts: *"I've worked mainly with the Army for my entire civilian career, both overseas and here in the United States. USMEPCOM is a unique workplace. It was a big change from where I came from when I first got here, but it is a great place to work at and I'm happy to be a part of our workforce."*



Tina Cukierski Fee-Basis Coordinator

Hometown: Kenosha, Wis. (but she's lived in Korea, Manhattan, Kan., and Bluffton, Ind., for a number of years before returning to Kenosha).

Other command positions:

Secretary for the Operations (Accessions) Division

Background: She's been working with fee-basis providers in a variety of capacities for 10 years.

Primary duties: Validating contractor billing hours and charges.

Supports mission: *"Without the fee-basis providers, we would have to close the MEPS doors."*

Honolulu packs up and takes medical processing to Saipan

By 1st Lt. Christine Leimbach
Assistant Operations Officer

The Honolulu MEPS medical section was asked to provide medical examinations in Saipan to support enlistment efforts there.

From March 12 to 21, Dr. Jim Gallup, assistant chief medical officer; Peggy Dexter, health technician; and Sgt. 1st Class John Acevedo, medical noncommissioned officer in charge; helped the people of Saipan qualify for military service.

Conducting a MEPS medical deployment is no small feat. It starts with coordination with the host island for lodging and medical processing facilities. Once facilities are in place, the medical NCOIC packs and ships all the equipment needed to conduct the deployment. Meanwhile, applicant records are shipped from Saipan to the MEPS for a modified quality review.

Since processing on Saipan is done without the aid of MIRS, internet connectivity and, sometimes, even telephones, it is crucial to thoroughly inspect records before departing.

After preparations were complete and the team deployed, they recreated a MEPS facility in the new location. Medical processing still consists of a medical brief, lab diagnostics, eye and hearing exam, orthopedic and neurological testing, and an interview with the doctor. In addition, all equipment must be in place to ensure proper applicant processing. On this deployment, the three-person medical team medically qualified 41 applicants for military service.



“The planning phase was a bit difficult due to the date changing several times,” Acevedo said. “The highlight of the mission was we, with Guam National Guard recruiters, came together to accomplish the mission. This is the first time it’s been done since my two year tenure at MEPS.”

Other team members expressed similar sentiments, and said they were excited to be part of this unique opportunity.

Saipan is one of several U.S. territories unique to Honolulu MEPS

operations. Many of the Pacific islands have been overwhelmingly supportive of the United States, often in its most troubling hours. Saipan was a focal point of Pacific operations during World War II, and was the site of the Battle of Saipan, a challenging and important victory for allied forces.

Deploying for an all-medical mission to this unique location without established operating procedures allowed staff from Honolulu MEPS’ to display their adaptability and problem-solving skills.





**Command Surgeon
Col. (Dr.)
Raymond Watters**

Hometown: Born in Cincinnati and raised in Clermont County, Ohio. “We lived in a rural community. My father was an industrial engineer. My parents were very conservative Methodists – old Methodist – who attended the Church of the Nazarene. There were three hours of church on Sunday morning, two hours on Sunday night, and an hour and a half on Wednesday night. There were two revival meetings a year that lasted a week and a half – Hellfire and damnation preaching. I’m ever grateful to my parents, not only for the Christian heritage I have, but for the rural heritage.” When he turned 18, he became an Anglican and joined the Church of England.

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “It wasn’t so much a toy as a place. I loved spending time in the woods, hunting for snakes and looking for arrowheads. I was pretty rough and tumble when I was growing up. My mother would always say, ‘God must have a guardian angel looking after you.’”

Education: Bachelor of science degree in molecular biology from Purdue University.

Long road to medical school: “I always wanted to be a physician, ever since I was very small. The problem was, when I was at Purdue, I had an advisor who used my hearing against me, (he is hearing impaired) never encouraged me at all and convinced me that I needed to go to dental school. I went to dental school for two years at Indiana University, one of the top schools in the country. I loved the basic sciences – anatomy, physiology. Because my undergraduate degree was in molecular biology, I had a strong background in biochemistry. Because the biochemistry course offered by the medical school was more robust, I petitioned to take that course through the medical school. The chairman of the department was a Harvard PhD in biochemistry as well as an M.D. I took the course he taught and I was acing it. He asked me what I was doing in dentistry. I told him about the hearing issue. He said the medical school should have made that decision, not the advisor. He called me and referred me to the executive dean at the medical school, and supported my application. The dean asked me if I really wanted to be a physician. I said, ‘There’s nothing in my heart I’d rather do. I would relish the opportunity.’ He was extremely supportive. At that time, there was a relationship between the number of students in professional schools and government funding. We didn’t realize how much my place in dental school would affect the dean’s efforts to transfer me to medical school. We applied to medical school twice. The first time, he thought for sure he had me in. The second time was denied, too. Politics was the major player here.”

You want me to go where? One day (the dean) called me in and said ‘I want you to go visit a friend of mine, a visiting professor of pathology from Spain.’ I talked to him and he understood the situation. To make a long story short, he came from the only private medical school in Spain. After a brief discussion, he invited me to consider studying medicine in Spain. After two weeks of some serious thought and soul searching, I accepted the challenge. When I first got to Spain, I was truly immersed, culturally and linguisti-

cally. It forced me to learn. After about two months of language training, my learning of the language accelerated. Initially, the professors let me do the exams in English. As I became more comfortable in Spanish, I asked if I could do them in Spanish. When you translate, you lose a lot of time. Six years later I graduated. I did my internship at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Covington, Ky., an affiliate of the University of Kentucky. I did my residency in family medicine at the University of Louisville.”

Another culture shock: “It was a rough and tumble internship. Knowledge-wise it was fine, but I had a whole different culture to learn. During the first rotation of my residency, I worked on the trauma service. You were on 36 hours and off 12. What that really means is that you were on about 40 and you were off eight. You didn’t get a whole lot of sleep, but I loved it. I jumped into it. During this rotation, I took an Advanced Trauma Life Support Course with students from the university hospital and Ireland Army Community Hospital, Fort Knox. The commander of the hospital at Fort Knox kept telling me I needed to come moonlight there. I told him I wasn’t allowed to in the first year. After the first year, I started moonlighting at Fort Knox and fell in love with the military. I joined the Army Reserve in my senior year as a resident. After residency, I went into private practice and stayed in the Reserve until 1990.” He applied for active duty in 1990, and was accepted.

Previous assignment: “I was the U.S. Army aviation medical consultant for the British Army Air Corps on exchange. The Brits take it to a new level in many different ways. Great people. We were doing a 10-year study on Apache helicopters. The Apache pilot wears a helmet with a monocle over the right eye. He can see through it, however, he looks through a grid with tactical data. The pilot fights with the right eye and flies with the left. The concept was initially developed in the ’70s. The question was whether or not a human being could do two such complex psychomotor functions at the same time. The study expanded over 10 years and found that not only can a human being do it, but

once they learn it, they can do it very well — with no negative residual effects on the nervous system.”

Favorite assignment: “My first assignment after the first Gulf War with Special Forces Group at Fort Devens, Mass. I was the group surgeon there for three years. Working with special operations and that caliber of people and the training they put you through. They push you beyond any limit you thought you had. You realize the limitations you think you have versus the limitations that are real are so different. Most of us never push ourselves that far.”

Hobbies: “I love to read. For me, reading is an escape. I’d rather do that than watch TV. I love history, especially when there is a lot of detail.”

What do you order when eat out? “I prefer chicken. I like beef, I like seafood, but I usually eat something chicken based. I try to eat healthy. I like dessert. I’ve got a sweet tooth like you wouldn’t believe.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “When I was born, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital gave me a chance for life.” He was born with an array of devastating birth injuries.

What’s your least favorite sport? “Basketball doesn’t do anything for me. I never took much interest in it because of my small stature and I couldn’t really engage in it. I enjoy snowboarding and running.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you. “Some people are surprised that being raised so conservatively, it’s hard to pigeon hole me. At Harvard they called it progressive, and I am progressive. I think some people find that surprising, given my severe upbringing. I think people are surprised by my activity. I’m getting back into running again. I’m certainly not afraid to try new things like jumping out of airplanes. One time in the Sinai, my commander let me go on leave and I climbed Kili-manjaro in five days. I came back and I’d lost 25 pounds and he said, ‘What the hell happened to you?’” He suggests that allowing more time for the climb would make it more enjoyable and less stressed.

What’s your favorite movie? “The Jason Bourne series.”

Who plays you when they make a movie of your life? “It has to be somebody of fairly small stature. James McAvoy, who played the doctor in the ‘Last King of Scotland.’ My heritage is Scottish anyway.”

What are you reading now? “‘The Junior Officers Reading Club.’ The book I was reading before was ‘Angels.’ It caught my attention. People say, ‘You read two or three books at a time?’ I do. I don’t know why, but I do.”

What’s your ideal vacation? “I’ve been around the world three times. More than a vacation, I have a dream that after I retire and build my house in the U.S., I would love to buy a small studio flat in London. That is my dream. I’ve taken some pretty exotic trips, but there’s just something about London.”



**Deputy
Command Surgeon
Lt. Col. (Dr.)
William Deitche**

Hometown: Chicago

Fond childhood memories:

“Growing up with family, being close to family, playing with cousins, playing with friends out in the street or in the park. Coming in when the sun

goes down, going out when it comes up.”

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “A rocking horse called ‘Blaze.’ It’s a very sturdy toy from the ‘50s that has mechanical legs and a sturdy build. I was reunited with it about five years ago. It’s been at my mom and dad’s house in South Holland. My little girls are playing with it now.”

Education: Bachelor of science degree in zoology and minors in chemistry and psychology from Eastern Illinois University. Medical degree from Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Why Army? “I wanted to be a Marine, because that was what my father was. I knew what a Marine was before I knew what the Army was. I didn’t really know what the military held for me. There came a time where it kind of passed me by.” His father was an infantryman.

Long and winding road: “I went to high school and trade school. I was a mechanic for a long time. I went to (college) late, then went directly to medical school out of undergraduate. In medical school I ran across a recruiter who said this might be the opportunity for me to get into the service.” He talked to his father, who told him there weren’t any doctors in the Marines. “He said you probably want to go in the Army.”

Turning wrenches: “I grew up as a mechanic. My dad was an industrial mechanic, a one-man shop owner. He fixed rail equipment, hydraulics, lift trucks, anything for industrial service. Growing up in that household, I was always exposed to repairs in the shop. That was my calling, to be a mechanic. It was just very natural. We never really had any discussion about college in our household. It was either you’re going to be a mechanic, a fireman or work at the steel mill. I swept floors from six years of age, then cleaned tools. That’s the way he babysat me. He’d take me to the shop. I’d go on service calls with him. I carried his toolbox when I was big enough. Starting in about 8th grade, he would put me on jobs. He’d just say ‘I need this fixed, see what you can do.’ After high

school I worked for several dealerships as a journeyman mechanic.”

A different path: A close friend’s parents were his inspiration to pursue a college degree. “He grew up in a white collar household. His dad was a high school physics teacher, his mom worked at State Farm Insurance. I modeled into that family as well as my family. I didn’t really know how to prepare for college. I didn’t take the SAT or the ACT or prep courses, because I was going to be a mechanic and work for my dad.”

Tough double duty: “My father was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma my second year of med school. He didn’t know I was (studying to be) ‘that’ kind of doctor. He thought I was going to school to be a PhD of some sort. On the weekend when we found out, they gave pretty direct course of action – radiation, chemo, surgery or die in a short time. He said ‘I can’t do it because my business won’t survive.’ The doctor said, ‘Your business and your family won’t survive if you don’t.’ I was there when the VA doc was giving him that talk. I said ‘Dad I can do your calls.’ Five o’clock was usually my time to hit the library, but I’d check the phone calls, check the answering machine and take off and go fix these pieces of equipment. These places run around the clock, so sometimes I was coming into medical school the next morning with no sleep, grease under my fingernails, and barely staying awake. For about three weeks he was pretty sick, I was in danger of failing one class and they said, ‘We need to recycle you.’ I said ‘I can’t delay being a doctor.’ I made a decision that I had to do it.”

Previous assignment: Fort Hood, Texas, as teaching staff in the residency program. “I was in charge of sports medicine curriculum and chief of the ethics committee.”

We have an emergency: He was on duty the day Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan allegedly killed 13 people and wounded 32 others. “It was a normal day. It was just after lunch. I had already seen my first patient and was telling him to (go to) the pharmacy and to the lab. When I walked in the door, my (medical assistant) grabbed him and said, ‘Sir you need to go to the lobby. I said, ‘No, he needs to go the

pharmacy and the laboratory. The MA looked at me and said, ‘Colonel Deitche, we have an emergency and we need you to go to the morning report room right away.’ I never had instructions like that in the middle of the clinic, so I walked over there and found out we were getting ready to receive wounded because a shooting had occurred on post and details were not very clear. In very fast order, we went through mass casualty operations to prepare for it.”

Vivid memories: “We didn’t know what the circumstances were. We were not in a place where we were getting information, just that we were getting wounded. The information kind of took on a life of its own. Many of us assumed there were multiple shooters. We didn’t know where the shooting was limited to. Was it only Fort Hood? Were there other areas? Those were the fog of war questions going on. We just knew we had to take care of wounded. It’s a residency, so you have junior officers being trained to be physicians and some medical students in the area. They were asking us what was going on and all we could say was ‘Don’t know, stay focused.’ It was important to realize that people were looking at people of higher rank and experience and trying to take cues from them. I did my best to say let’s just take care of these people because those other things don’t matter right now. When somebody thinks it’s time for us to know, we’ll know. In the meantime, stop that bleeding, get that IV in and let’s push on.”

Future military plans: I would like to go on as long as I can, to find a place in the military that needs me. I have long-term plans, but I realize they are just a framework.

What do you like best about being a doctor? “The greatest reward for me is helping people. I wasn’t really challenged as a mechanic. If you can’t fix it, replace it. As a doctor, you don’t get to apply those principles. You don’t get to replace people. I’ve helped people change tires and changed their blood pressure medicine.”

What do you order when you eat out? “It depends on where I am. If I’m at Lou Malnati’s, it’s butter crust cheese and sausage pizza.

If I’m at Aurelio’s in South Chicago, it’s thin crust pizza. It tends to be pizza. I’ve got my favorites for different places.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “A digital picture frame. I got it for Fathers Day when I was out at command and general staff college.” It’s loaded with family photos.

What’s your guilty pleasure? “Working on my 1970 Chevelle SS. It’s got a 454 LS 5 motor. It looks and runs like a 1970. It’s not been modified. It’s red with black stripes. It’s got a cowl induction hood and all the bells and whistles that came on an SS package. One of my pleasures is making it a 1970 Chevelle from clamp to switch. You can see the gas gauge go down after an acceleration.”

What’s your least favorite sport? “Golf. I guess because people often ask me to go golfing, and I just haven’t had the appreciation to want to do it. It looks nice to me, but it also looks like it takes a lot of time and skill and money. I have golfed, if that’s what you call it, but it’s more like gardening because I’m throwing sod and dirt.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you: “My background. I grew up as a mechanic, I am a mechanic. I enjoy it. I’m very atypical. I also like to fix things around the house.”

What’s your favorite movie? “‘Casablanca.’ I like the history, the time, Vichy France, and how the Nazis were trying to impose their will. Humphrey Bogart. What’s not to like about that rugged American character and what he stood for?”

Who plays you when they make a movie of your life? He selected great actors of the past. “Probably Gary Cooper or Jimmy Stewart because people identified with things in their non-movie life that were played out in many of their roles. They were hard to type cast. I’m hard to typecast.”

What are you reading? “Up Front.” “It’s a retrospective on Mauldin’s ‘Willy and Joe’ cartoons, how and what he wrote and how Patton hated it.” Also, “All for the King’s Shilling” by Edward J. Coss. “It’s a military history of British soldiers and how they were misunderstood. It’s kind of a historical band

of brothers. They got little pay, less food, but still held together.”

What's your ideal vacation? “Chicago. I've come here on leave from Hawaii, New York, D.C., Korea. My leave address was usually Chicago. It involves a trip to Ravinia (a park that features musical performances), getting some pizza and taking in some sports.”

Cubs or Sox? “I'm bi-fanual. I have five daughters. Two of them are very much Sox fans, two of them are Cubs fans. The three-year-old is leaning toward Black and White. I grew up on the South Side, but my father was a Cubs fan. My uncles were Sox fans, so I grew up very confused. Wrigley Field didn't have lights when I was growing up, so if you were going to see a Cubs game, you were going to miss school, so that didn't happen too often. The Sox games were in the evening. I would go there with my grandfather or with the uncles, so I got to see more Sox games growing up. I have to be kind of neutral so I don't alienate my daughters.”



**Deputy Director
Annette Waddelow**

Hometown: “I was born in Millington, Tenn., but I never lived there. My dad was in the Navy so I was born at a military hospital in Mil-

lington, but he retired when I was 9. When he retired, we lived in the Florida Panhandle. By the time I was in high school, my parents were divorced and a friend of my mom's convinced her to move to Colorado, so I graduated from high school in Colorado and my first year of college was at Western State College in Gunnison, Colo. Meanwhile, my mom decided she didn't like the snow, moved back to Florida and told me I had to come home. I was in the process of transferring to University of West Florida and I was going to be at home when she moved to St. Petersburg and left me homeless. When I joined the military about two weeks after I graduated from college, my home of record the entire time I was in the military was in St. Petersburg. I claim a state, Florida, because that's where I grew up.”

Why Air Force? “When I was in college there were some Marine Corps recruiters that came to the college and talked to me. Because I was 9 when my dad retired, I really didn't consider myself a Navy brat, but they got me all excited about joining the military. Then they showed me the physical requirements. I wasn't exactly a couch potato, but in my generation, and where I grew up, females wore dresses and got in trouble if they did something physical. There was an upper body strength requirement for the Marine Corps, and the summer after my junior year I was trying to do that on a clothesline pole and wasn't doing very well. I saw a card from the Air Force and I filled it out. There wasn't an upper body strength requirement, you just had to run and I could run OK. My degree was in math and they needed people with math degrees and I became a communications-electronics officer and the rest is history.” She served 22 years active duty.

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “I gotta go with Barbie dolls. My mom was the best (seamstress) in the world. She used to make Barbie clothes. That's what we would get for Christmas. We had the best-dressed Barbie dolls. We had the Barbie convertible, you name it. My two sisters and I played Barbie dolls all the time.”

Education: Bachelor of arts degree in mathematics from the University of West Florida; master of business administration from Oklahoma City University; master's degree in operations research from George Washington University.

Favorite assignment: “I worked at the Air Force Personnel Center for four years. It's the job where I felt like I had the resources to be the best person I could be to get the organization's mission done. They saw the worth of what we were doing and gave us what we needed to do our jobs.”

Crunching the numbers: “I was an operations research analyst. There was an analytical cell. I analyzed officer promotion board results, the outcome, why certain demographic groups weren't selected and major command selection rates. Then I was part of the implementation group for the Air Force evaluation system, the system they still have now. My former boss led a study group. There was an analyst on that group, but once the decision was made on the line of the Air Force side, he returned to where he was and I took his place. I did all the analysis on the non-line categories, so the chaplains, doctors, nurses, lawyers and how the system was going to apply to the non-line areas. I was also the interface for the (information technology) side as well, because there was a system called Prism that was managing evaluation boards.”

Hobbies: “I play at the guitar. I don't read music so I'm not that great at it, but I enjoy it. I enjoy reading. Depending on the assignment, my family and I water skied. We owned a boat and would go to lakes and ski, and picnic and all that.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “When I retired from the Air Force, my goal was to give back. When I first retired, I worked in an elementary school. My thought process was that I would do something for my community. Paycheck wise, I had my retirement and didn't need as much, so I took a lower paying job to do that. It was working out really well until the school board got involved. There were budget issues

and I just got tired of that side of it. I took a couple years off and missed working. I enjoy working, the interaction of being with people and accomplishing something. When I grow up my goal is to have an impact on accomplishing something. That's why I like what's going on with VIPS. We are transforming and moving to something new and meaningful that will improve the accession process. That's right up my alley."

Taking names: "I worked in the front office at the school. I registered kids. I tracked attendance. The building I was in only had third and fourth grade. Then they closed that down and I helped open another huge school."

Now that's good eatin': "The best meal I ever had was when I was stationed in Hawaii at (Commander in Chief, Pacific) Headquarters. The admiral had a cooking staff for when he had foreign visitors. When that wasn't going on, they provided lunch. They had a dining room, but you had to be an O-6 or above to go in there. I worked for the deputy commander. A lot of times we had to stay in the office over lunch and they would allow us to order from there. This was the best meal: taco soup, half a chicken-macadamia nut salad and a caramel ice cream sundae with lemonade."

What's the best present you ever got? "I go straight to the emotional part. Because my mother recently died, I'm going to set my kids and the ring they gave me aside. My mother was a single parent for a time, worked to support us, and struggled financially. For my birthday one year, she went to a pawn shop and bought me an Ovation guitar, which is a relatively fancy guitar, especially for our economic situation. That thing went with me everywhere. When I was in college, I took it to the beach. I still have those pictures in my mind. When I went to Officer Training School, it went with me. It had to be in the storage closet during the week, but on the weekend it was an outlet for me. It followed me a long way."

What's your guilty pleasure? Peppermint ice cream.

What's your least favorite sport? "Wrestling or boxing. I'm of the view

that there's enough pain in the world without doing it for sport."

Tell me something people would be surprised to now about you:

"I'm a 70 percent disabled veteran. Walking around day-to-day, I look relatively healthy. I always say that every person has their story and their challenges. I try to go out every day and do my best, but I do have my moments where some days are harder than others. I try not to let it get in the way for the most part."

What's your favorite movie?

"The Sound of Music.' I like the story, the goals the people had, the changes they made in their lives, and that they had music in their lives."

Who plays you when they make a movie of your life? "I've been told that Bonnie Blair looks like me."

Diverse reading tastes: "I tend not to remember titles. The library in my hometown has book sales. There will be a paper bag full of books. I have two sides when it comes to reading. I like Tom Clancy novels and I've read the Brotherhood series. Then there's the other sides where I pull Nora Roberts kind of books."

What's your best vacation ever?

"Before we had kids, my husband and I took a military hop out of Dover, Del., to Ramstein (Germany). We knew a couple there and they let us use their house as a staging point. We went to the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy. We made good use of our time. We took a bus tour up to the Rhein River and on the way back, my husband was looking at this map book and said, 'If we have the guy let us out here, we can just walk back to our hotel. It will be a lot closer than going all the way back.' He gets the driver to let us out in the middle of nowhere and as we're walking, he finally said, 'I don't think we're where I thought we were.' Our only choice was to hitchhike. I never hitchhiked in my life until then. This man in a VW bus stops, picks us up, talks to us the whole way and takes us all the way back to our hotel. People helping people. It didn't matter that we were American. It was just a nice person that did that for us."



**Field Support East
Dr. Beatrice Aguado**

Hometown: Chicago. "I loved it. It's so cosmopolitan. There's so much diversity. You go into any little neighborhood and it could be Italian, Korean or Vietnamese, Polish and you can try all these cuisines and you don't have to go anywhere."

Fond childhood memories: "Riding my bicycle." She had a 10-speed. "My mother used to worry about me. I would ride everywhere. She'd say, 'You're just riding around the block?' and I'd say, 'Yes ma'am.'" I went all over the city and I didn't realize how bad some parts of the city were. I remember my mother telling me one day, 'You can ride your bicycle, but don't you dare go anywhere you're not supposed to. And you don't go anywhere near Cabrini Green.' (It was a notorious public housing project.) I didn't even know where that was. One day I was riding my bike and saw about eight police officers in a group. They were just patrolling and they said, 'Little girl, you need to get out of here.' Then I saw this huge sign that said Cabrini Green. Even the police officers were afraid to be there and had to be in groups. I was pretty sheltered I guess."

Education: "I was a college tourist. I started off at Wilbur Wright Community College and then I did ROTC through Loyola University. Then I

went to the University of Honolulu and did a little stint at the New Mexico Military Institute, but a military college was a little too rough for me. Then I came back and finished up my undergrad at Northeastern and finished all the prerequisites for going into medicine.” She earned a bachelor of arts degree in political studies and behavioral science with a minor in basic sciences and her medical degree from the University of Illinois, with residency at Loyola University Medical Center.

How was residency? “It was rigorous. By that time, they had instituted the 80-hour work week, but it was still pretty rigorous. Come in at 7 a.m. and stay until 2 a.m.; go home and take a nap and go back to work. I was in the National Guard throughout residency. I was a flight surgeon in Illinois. I was just doing physicals. Because I was in residency, I wasn’t able to go active duty.”

War memories: “I served as a combat medic right after high school and went to the Gulf War. That’s where I picked up my love of medicine. I try not to think about (the war). It took a long time to get over it. I’d say the wonderful memories are the physicians. You’d ask if you could tag along and they’d explain everything. It was wonderful mentoring.”

Favorite assignment: Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. “I enjoyed being deployed. The camaraderie was solid. Everybody got along very well.”

Another hitch? “Right now, I’m debating about going back into the National Guard or the Air National Guard. I’m interested in public health and the Air National Guard would send me away for six or eight weeks of training. That would be very nice for my education.”

A world of opportunities: “I’ve had every opportunity. When I was in the National Guard going through the flight surgeon course, I remember they even asked me to be an astronaut, which was something I’d never thought anyone would ask me. I thought ‘Oh, wow, what a tremendous honor.’ But I would have had to give up medicine and I didn’t go through so many years of school just to take care of four or five people in the air. Even getting into a (mission) would take three or four years and I’d

rather be able to give to more people; to be of more use.”

What do you like best about your job? “Helping the physicians, coordinating some sticky situations sometimes. Just taking care of them and making sure they have everything they need to get the job done and clearing up any ambiguity with the recruits. I enjoy visiting the MEPS. I see all those young people and they’re eager. They’re so excited to be joining the military. You can see it’s a new phase of their lives. It’s almost like seeing a baby being born. You’re so happy for them. In a way, you’re honored to be in their presence. Here we are in a time of war and they’re stepping up. I’m amazed by it. They’re absolutely selfless.”

What do you order when you eat out: “Thai food. I enjoy hot, spicy food. Korean barbecue is delicious. Spicy Indian food.”

What’s the best present you ever got? “A camera. When I was in high school I wanted to be a combat photographer. That’s why I went to join the military. I had a mentor, a teacher, who got me into photography. He showed me a picture of this young man standing behind all this rubble and this structure. It was probably from World War II. That one picture spoke so much. It was amazing. I said, ‘I’m going to do that.’ I went to sign up right after high school. For three years I had envisioned being a combat photographer. Then I got there and they said I didn’t qualify. I said ‘I scored the highest on the ASVAB.’ But they said, ‘You don’t know how to type. You have to be able to type to be a photojournalist. Then they asked if I wanted to be a medic and I said I guess so.’”

Do you still shoot? “Yes I do. During the Gulf War I remember the photojournalists. They’d come out with their cameras and I say, ‘Oh, let me see.’ They told me it didn’t have any film. We can take pictures, go to our van and through satellite, shoot it up to Washington in about 15 seconds. The (digital) cameras were about \$15,000 each and I said I wanted one of those. Now they’re everywhere. You can still be just as creative in the darkroom, you have Photoshop.”

What’s your guilty pleasure? “The Internet. I just love learning

things, whether it’s the New England Journal of Medicine online or up-to-date medical literature or reading CNN or the Chicago Tribune. I don’t watch television. People look at me like I’m weird. I’m amazed. If there’s some little esoteric thing I want to know about, it’s like having a library in your house.”

What’s your least favorite sport? “Hockey. I think it takes so much skill and it’s so fast, I can’t follow it. By the time I see the puck, everybody’s cheering and I’m saying where did it go? I enjoy the crowd, but it’s just too fast for me.”

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you: “I was into popular culture back in the ’80s, so I guess that’s where I’m stuck. I like popular music of that era. I’m a huge Michael Jackson fan. I had tickets to see him (in London) but it didn’t happen. I wanted to see if this 50-year-old man could still do it. I was really excited. I thought maybe he was a savant because he was so skilled (as a musician), but he just didn’t have social skills.”

What’s your favorite movie? “That would be ‘My Fair Lady.’ It kind of parallels my life. You get this young girl who comes from a poor background without opportunity. She doesn’t speak right or carry herself well and then she gets a makeover and here she is now, this glamorous, well-spoken articulate woman. My parents came from Mexico and they didn’t speak English. They went through school up to third grade. I was able to go through school. America gave me this opportunity.”

Who plays you when they make a movie of your life? “Faye Dunaway. She’s kind of high strung in her movies and I’m a little bit that way.”

What’s the last book you read? “The re-released biography of Michael Jackson. It was wonderful, but I almost didn’t want to finish it because I knew the end.”

What’s your dream vacation? “Honolulu is my favorite city to vacation, but I’m planning to elope soon and I’m trying to pick places. Maybe Switzerland or Rio de Janeiro, Italy. We’ve been together for like nine years and we’re just going to pick a date and finally do it.”



Field Support West Dr. Tony Lehner

Hometown: Dayton, Ohio. “It was a great place to grow up. My father owned two drug stores and I kind of grew up in the drug stores. I went to Chaminade High School and the University of Dayton.”

Fond childhood memories: “The snow.” When he was living in Texas, prior to working at MEPCOM, “Everyone said, ‘People from Texas can’t move to Chicago.’” Instead, the snow in Chicago made it easy for him to move here.

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? “An erector set. You put it together and take it apart. It was kind of an engineering thing.” He once built a Ferris wheel that filled the basement.

You got accepted where? “I never really thought about going anywhere, but when it came time to go to medical school, I got in to Johns-Hopkins. Everyone in town was kind of surprised; me too. I was a pretty hard worker in college, though. After Hopkins, I was going to do neurosurgery, so I got an internship in surgery at the University of Texas Southwest-

ern in Dallas that was pretty much of a trauma internship, which was good if you were going to be a neurosurgeon.”

How does a person get into a prestigious school like Johns-Hopkins? “I have no idea. Hopkins is one of the places that prides itself on its research activity, that’s pretty much what I was looking for. I had done some rudimentary research in muscle physiology in college. I guess that’s what they were looking at as much as anything. Other than that it’s kind of a mystery. It was wonderful to rub shoulders with all those folks. I can’t say I have the photographic memory that many of the people there did.”

A change in plans: “Along the way, I married a Texan and moved up to Minnesota, did a year of neurosurgery residency and didn’t like it a whole lot. I went back to Hopkins and ended up finishing in anesthesia. I finished a residency in anesthesiology with a fellowship in cardiac anesthesia. We ended up back in Dallas. I practiced 33 years in cardiac anesthesia. We have four kids, all grown up, and two grandkids, (who are) a source of pride.”

Tell me about the grandkids: “They’re great. They (were born) five days apart, last November. One’s a girl and one’s a boy, one born in Dallas and then five days later in New Orleans. My daughter told me it wasn’t a race, it wasn’t a contest. It was great fun.”

How did you come to be with the government? “I retired from (private practice) and worked in the MEPS in Dallas. I was a fee basis-practitioner in Dallas and worked a lot for a while. Then we didn’t have much work left. The workload varies, so one day on a whim, I was online at USA Jobs and saw this job, applied for it and then forgot about it. About three weeks later, I was working in the MEPS and the phone rang. They said, ‘This is headquarters in Chicago,’ and I was like, ‘Really?’ One thing led to another. I was very happy about that.” He’s been here about a year.

How did you like working it the MEPS? “It was great. It was a lot of fun, and I didn’t anticipate that would be the case. After you’ve taken care of old people for 30 years, and old people have complaints; they come in with a chief complaint. That’s the whole idea, right? Everybody’s got a complaint, but with older people it’s most if the time. It’s problems, problems, problems. Then you go into the MEPS and find yourself among these young kids at the beginning of their lives and they’re all smiling. They’re all excited to be there. It’s a whole different deal. It’s kind of electric.”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I think this is it. I’m pretty sure we’re here. I just want to do a good job. I’m in a unique position because most other people are looking for a promotion here or a promotion there. This is probably the last job I’ll ever have. I guess I could go back to be a CMO or something. The only thing I have to do is a good job. There’s not any particular incentive to do anything else.”

Hobbies: “Sailing, but I don’t do it much. I was going to go over to finally take the course where you get certified so you can rent a boat over here. You have to take this Navy course. I ended up out of town, so I’ll do that in the spring.”

What do you like best about your job? “Dealing with people, particularly the medical officers in the field. They are really good people – intelligent, working hard to do a good job. It makes you feel good when you can help them do that.”

What do you order when you eat out? “Fish. When the one grandkid was in New Orleans we’d go down there and spend the day eating fish, shrimp, crawfish. There’s nothing better. Your hands burn. It’s absolutely great. That’s part of what we miss. (My daughter) is married to a radiology resident and they moved to Oklahoma City. I kept telling them that they were going to miss New Orleans. The last weekend we were (in New Orleans), we went to Bren-

nan's, which is the best breakfast in New Orleans, and had about a six-hour breakfast. There's nothing like poached eggs with crawfish and crab meat on top of it. Put some Hollandaise sauce over it."

The car's got to go: "My wife bought me an MGB for my birthday, about an 18-year-old MGB. It was the coolest gift. We finally sold it. We ran out of room in the garage when the kids went to college, actually before that. There was a 15-year period where there was never a car in the garage. One kid would go off to college and get an apartment and you'd put the stuff in a U-haul and take it there. Then he'd come back and you put it in there. It was just a furniture depot."

What's your guilty pleasure?

"Chocolate. I get fat when I eat it."

What's your least favorite sport?

"Soccer. It's just not very exciting."

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you:

I play classical piano. I once played a piano concerto at Memorial Hall (in Dayton). It's been all downhill since then." He started playing when he was 6

What's your favorite movie?

"'Hard Rain' (a disaster movie.) Remember Airport, Airport II and Airport III? They kind of ran out of airport things to do, so they started burning buildings down. Then they had earthquake movies. There was nothing else to make a movie about, so they made 'Hard Rain.'"

Who plays you when they make a movie of your life? "Jason Alexander, the guy who played George Costanza. He looks like me."

What's the last book you read?

"A thing called 'Sea Wolf Class.' It's fun naval fiction."

What's your ideal vacation? "Fly somewhere and go skiing. I'll never do it. Someplace really isolated, the back country."



Quality Operations Michele Bittinger

Hometown: Lake Fenton, Mich.

"It's right in the middle between Detroit and Flint. It's very rural, lots of lakes. It's very similar to Antioch (Ill., where she lives now) I feel like it's a fit there for me."

Fond childhood memories: "My family are all beef and dairy farmers up through there. Growing up was all about family and family get-togethers and celebrations, and playing out with the cows, baling the hay and jumping in the hay. My mom retired as a GS-14 and my dad was an engineer for General Motors. They had professional careers, but we would go to every family function. I come from this big, Irish family where you go for everything — Mother's Day, whoever is getting married, whoever is having a baby, things like that."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid? "I had a little Thumbelina doll. I still have it. It's this little tiny thing. When you pull the string, she moves her head around. I liked dolls a lot. I still do. She was this little blond baby and I used to have really, really blonde hair."

Education: Bachelor's degree in health care administration with an emphasis in behavioral management from the University of Michigan;

master of science in administration in health services administration from Central Michigan University
Let me suture that for you: She was a Navy corpsman 1980-1990. "I loved my job because at that time a doctor would train a corpsman to do anything they could do. My specialty was minor surgery. I loved it. I loved suturing. It was one of the most challenging things I could do. My patient care background has gotten me everywhere. That was the foundation for my entire career. I am actually a hospital administrator with extensive patient care background. That has provided me with a niche in my career. My specialty now is quality and patient safety."

What was your favorite job? Head of quality at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital. Senior leadership was strong and supportive, so the sky was limit in what I was able to accomplish. It was very collaborative."

What's your career plan? "To continue to excel at what I'm doing. We have an opportunity to become a lot more efficient, to bring the way we do business into the mainstream."

Finding a better way: "I was hired to develop a quality program for MEPS medical sections. I'm a Lean Six Sigma green belt, so it's all about office improvement and efficiencies, being able to streamline cumbersome processes and remove steps that have no value, trying to introduce more efficiencies. The biggest thing right now seems to be addressing the dichotomy between the training base physical assessments and the MEPS medical assessments. My focus, right now especially with preparations for VIPs, is to identify those discrepancies. The providers do the MEPS physicals and then applicants in process medically at the training bases, before they go into boot camp. When the same tests — like audiograms or ophthalmology — don't marry up, the biggest issue is trying to figure out why. The tests should be the same, there shouldn't be that big a variation. The MEPS physical hasn't changed in decades. With medical technology being so much more sophisticated, why hasn't it changed?"

What do you want to be when you grow up? "I am it. I feel really

good about what I've been able to accomplish and the person I've been able to evolve into and want to continue to do more of the same. I really like my job, I really like my career, I really like myself."

Hobbies: "I have an 1891 Victorian cottage that I'm always working on. I love to rescue furniture and refinish it and those kinds of things."

What do you order when you eat out? "Chopped salad is my favorite."

What's the best present you ever got? "A maxi skirt. In the early 70s, skirts were going long and all the flower power and all that stuff. My dad said if I got all A's one semester, he would buy me the skirt." She was in about 6th grade.

What's your guilty pleasure?

"White chocolate Kit Kat bars. I don't care for dark chocolate and they're hard to find because a lot of people don't like white chocolate."

Play ball: "I was really good at softball throughout high school. I was on the very first girls softball team that my school offered and played all the way through. After I was on active duty, I had the opportunity to play softball for the Navy. I was on orders and got paid to play softball for a year. I played shortstop. It was so fun. I played until I had my second child."

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you:

"People think I'm really feminine because of my clothes and jewelry. I love to dress up. That's one of the reasons I work. In my off time I like to get really dirty working on my house or refurbishing furniture or playing softball. That's always been kind of a consistent theme in my life."

What's your favorite movie? "An Officer and a Gentleman," because the guy goes in after the girl and carries her out."

What's the last book you read?

"I usually read something with a psychological theme. I read 'The Secret.' It was about throwing positive thoughts out into the universe and how that manifests and comes back to you."

What's your ideal vacation: "A bed and breakfast somewhere for a long week end. Or a dude ranch."



Quality Management Al Fuerte

Hometown: Milwaukee. "It's a nice city. When you're a kid you like the snow and the four seasons, but when you get older, the bones start to hurt. I like the south better."

Fond memories: "A lot of people don't know I used to be Bernie Brewer, the mascot for the Milwaukee Brewers in 1981 and 1982. That's the year they went to the World Series. Unfortunately, I didn't get to participate in the World Series, but for about a year and a half, I was Bernie Brewer sliding down the slide (whenever a Brewer hit a home run.)" He was about 17. "I was also the ballboy. I used to play catch with the major leaguers." He didn't interact with the players much, but the job did have its perks. "The players used to give us equipment that was broken, but it was still major league equipment. To us it was brand new. A lot of it was just scratched, but to them it was broken. Gorman Thomas would give you a bat, Paul Molitor would give you a couple of baseballs, stuff like that."

What was your favorite toy when you were a kid: "Probably the old Atari system. I remember Pong."

Going the distance: He was in the Air Force for a little more than 20 years and retired as a master

sergeant. He was an administrative specialist.

Raising young troops: "I was a military training instructor 1994-97. Initially you liked turning 'nothing to something' in six weeks. In the Air Force (being a TI is) voluntary, so it's hard to recruit TIs. It's something not a lot of people want to do. When you went to school, you got some on-the-job training with a senior instructor and after a few weeks, there's your clipboard, there's your flight, go train. It's very rewarding, but after about the third year, you're drained because you're working 17-18 hours a day. You have to plan way in advance to take leave."

What was your favorite assignment? The duty at Lackland (Air Force Base, Texas). It seemed like after a couple of years it was all I knew how to do. It was very rewarding and I was good at it. It's a very false environment there because instructors have egos. How they portray themselves outside is not how they act when they're in front of their flight. It was a lot of fun to be in that atmosphere."

Moving around the headquarters: "I worked in the command group then I went to the operations center. I came up here temporarily to help medical out and it just so happened I stayed here."

Hobbies: "I bought a house recently and I've been getting into house projects. I have a Harley-Davidson and I like to go out and ride my Harley."

What do you like best about your job? "Working with the people at the MEPS and helping them with their issues. I'm the contracting officer representative for the fee basis provider and HIV contracts, so there's a lot of interaction with the chief medical officers, the fee basis (providers), the medical NCOICs and identifying issues to the contractor and resolving them."

What do you want to be when you grow up? "I would like to be an electrician or woodworker. I find it enjoyable. Creating something out of nothing and having it work is fun."

What do you order when you eat out? "Usually it's steak tacos. I get the Mexican style with cilantro, onions, hot sauce and beef."

What's the best present you ever got? "I have a lot of little toys. A laptop. It was just your regular Dell laptop. It was my first laptop. Before that I only had desktops."

What's your guilty pleasure?

"I like going out and having a few beers."

What's your least favorite sport?

"Soccer. Even though I understand it, there's not enough scoring. It's just too slow-paced."

Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you:

"I have a Tex-Mex accordion and I'm

trying to learn Tejano music. I like to go dancing at the Tejano bars, because it's a certain kind of dancing. The spin dancing, the turns, it's enjoyable."

What's your favorite movie?

"Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory,' the 1971 version. I like the music and the spirit of the movie. If it's on, I watch it, even if I saw it the day before."

Who plays you when they make a movie of your life? "Erik Estrada. I've been told I look like him."

What's the last book you read? "I don't actually read books. I subscribe to six or seven magazines from woods and crafts to home improvement."

What's your ideal vacation? "I would take a cruise to Alaska just to see the open country, the wilderness. I just think that would be so awesome. The vastness of it, the expanse, the mountains. That's been one of my dreams."

COMMUNITY

Boston supports Fisher House opening

By Diane Mihalko
Medical Supervisor

Boston MEPS staff took part in the dedication ceremony for the Boston Fisher House, the nation's 46th.

Doug "VB" Doudie, a local television broadcaster, was the master of ceremonies. Special guests included Rich Gotham, Boston Celtics president; Michelle Keating, Alder Foods chief executive officer; and Dr. Michael Mayo-Smith, director for the Veterans Affairs New England Healthcare System. The keynote speaker was Kenneth Fisher, chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Fisher House Foundation.

Medal of Honor recipient retired Navy Capt. Thomas G. Kelley attended.

Ten families were already staying at the Boston Fisher House on the day of the dedication. There are 20 rooms, each with a private bathroom. There is a communal kitchen, dining room, living room and laundry room. Fisher House Boston serves veterans and military families while their loved ones are receiving inpatient treatment at the VA Boston Healthcare System.

Similar to Ronald McDonald houses, Fisher Houses serve service members, veterans and their families. The Fisher House Foundation builds and donates "comfort homes" on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers, which enable

family members to be close to a loved one during hospitalization due to illness, disease or injury at no cost.

The Fisher House Program was established in 1990 by Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher. Today, Zachary's grandnephew, Ken Fisher, is the chairman and CEO of the Fisher House Foundation. He continues the legacy of reuniting military and veterans' families in a time of need.

"We have a mission that we have committed ourselves to, and that is to support our troops," Ken Fisher said. "They deserve the best we have, and we'll be there as long as we're needed."

In addition to the 46 Fisher Houses currently operating, 12 more are under construction. The Fisher House program serves more than 12,000 families annually and has made more than three million days of lodging available to family members since the program began.



Diane Mihalko, Boston MEPS medical supervisor, 1st Sgt. Nathaniel Francis, MEPS first sergeant, Elizabeth St. Pierre, Boston Fisher House commander, and Cmdr. Cathy Masar, MEPS commander, at the Boston Fisher House dedication.

The Boston MEPS began its "adoption" of the Boston Fisher House earlier this year. The MEPS staff recently donated a car load of items such as gift cards, kitchen items and toiletries. The Boston MEPS plans to provide a home-cooked dinner and dessert quarterly for the families at the Fisher House. By providing these meals the MEPS staff hopes to ease the burden on these military families who have already endured so much.

More information on Fisher House and how people can support one in their area is at <http://www.fisherhouse.org/>

Columbus turns pink at 'Race for the Cure'

The Columbus MEPS gave back to the community, when seven staff members participated in the Susan G. Koman Race for the Cure.

All proceeds from the race benefit breast cancer research. The event attracted a record crowd of 50,286, third largest in the country, and raised more than \$2.5 million.

Columbus MEPS team members were Maj. Michael Thomas, commander; 1st Lt. Lauren Perry, operations officer; Senior Chief Petty Officer Crystal McGhee, senior enlisted advisor; Wayne Crook, test control officer; Thomas Jefferson, test control technician; Pam Kaler, human resources assistant; and Darlin Lee, test administrator.

The community in and around the Columbus MEPS was inspired by local heroine/celebrity, Stefanie Spielman who fought the disease with tenacity and courage.

She is an inspiration to Team Columbus and the spark for its participation in the Race for the Cure.

Spielman was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998, when she was 31.

She established the Stefanie Spielman Fund for Breast Cancer Research after her diagnosis, considering it a life mission to raise money and awareness.

She became a public figure for her outreach and often attended Komen Columbus events and the Race for the Cure, including serving



The Columbus MEPS Race for the Cure team shows its colors before hitting the road.

as the emcee and keynote speaker for several events.

Spielman received an award from Komen Columbus in 2007, celebrating her dedication to raising awareness and funds to fight the disease and helped kick-off the race several years in a row.

Heather Pick, a local television anchorwoman, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1999 when she was

29. She became a spokeswoman for breast cancer awareness and an active member of the central Ohio community.

Pick learned in 2004 that the disease she had beaten once had returned. She participated in many new treatments and remained on-air during much of her treatment, saying, "I don't want people looking at me with puppy dog eyes. I don't want to make this a 'Woe is me' thing."

Throughout both their very public battles with this disease, Pick and Spielman fought courageously while helping others and raising millions of dollars for cancer research. The pink wigs are worn in Pick's memory.

Through the Spielmans' research foundation and more than 100 other community events they organized, Stefanie and her husband, Chris, a legendary Ohio State Buckeye and former NFL linebacker, raised \$6.5 million for breast cancer research for The Ohio State University's Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute.



Pink was the color of the day for the Komen Columbus Race for the Cure.

Pick was an unwavering champion for breast cancer awareness and education. She received a community volunteer award from Komen Columbus in 2006, served as the emcee for Komen Columbus' 2007 Committed to the Cure award luncheon and participated annually in the Race for the Cure, including emceeding the race for several years.

In her last public appearance, Pick hosted the "Spirit Celebration with Heather Pick," raising almost \$500,000 for the Columbus Cancer Clinic. Her last television appearance was to kick off Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

In addition to being friends, both women were wives and mothers and loved by many. They will be missed, but their mission to end breast cancer will continue.

Susan G. Komen fought breast cancer with her heart, body and soul. Throughout her diagnosis, treatments and endless days in the hospital, she spent her time thinking of ways to make life better for other women battling breast cancer instead of worrying about her own situation.

Moved by Susan's compassion for others and commitment to making a difference, Nancy G. Brinker promised her sister that she would do everything in her power to end breast cancer.

Though Komen lost her battle with the disease, her legacy lives on through the work of Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Komen for the Cure is the global leader of the breast cancer movement, and has raised more than \$1 billion since it began in 1982.

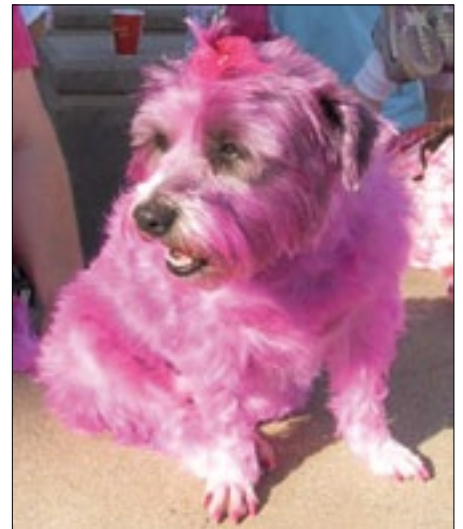
Komen's promise is to save lives and end breast cancer forever by empowering people, ensuring quality care for all and energizing science to find the cures.

Across the country, that promise is upheld by a network of 122 local affiliate offices.

At the heart of each affiliate is a person or group of people who, like Komen, wanted to make a difference.

The Columbus affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure was started in 1993 by a group of motivated, hardworking volunteers.

That same passion, carried on throughout the years by thou-



Even the dogs were "in the pink" at the Race for the Cure.

sands of volunteers and dedicated board and staff members, has sustained Komen Columbus and enabled it to raise more than \$13 million to support breast cancer education, screening and treatment.

The Komen Columbus affiliate ranks in the top 10 for Race for the Cure participation. Its Web site is <http://www.komencolumbus.org/>

Atlanta joins 17,000 who walked in their city

(Right) More than 17,000 people participated in Atlanta's Race for the Cure.



(Left) Three of the members of Team Atlanta MEPS pose for a photo (left to right): Carson Tuiolosega, Petty Officer 2nd Class Daniel Wimberly and Naomi Hunkin.

Western Sector holds changes of command on USS Constitution

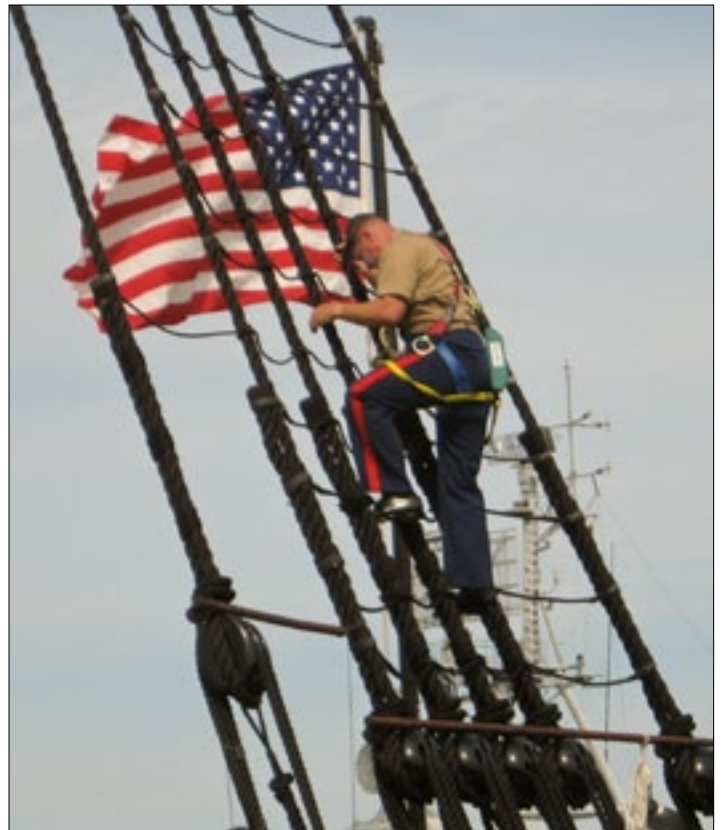
In a time-honored military tradition of the transfer of authority from one officer to another, Western Sector conducted changes of command June 22 for the 5th and 7th Battalions aboard the USS Constitution in Boston during its annual conference.

Cmdr. Timothy M. Cooper, the Constitution's commander, hosted the event after supporting tours for sector members.

Col. Charles Dunston, Western Sector commander, was the guest speaker and presiding officer as Cmdr. Christine Caston assumed command of 5th Battalion from Cmdr. Richard Obregon and Cmdr. Karin Vernazza assumed command of 7th Battalion, succeeding Cmdr. Alex Ortiz.

The Constitution is a wooden-hulled, three-masted heavy frigate. It was named after the U.S. Constitution by President George Washington. She is the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel and is most famous for her actions during the War of 1812 against Great Britain, when she captured numerous merchant ships and defeated five British warships, earning her the nickname "Old Ironsides."

Today, the Constitution promotes understanding of the Navy's role in war and peace through educational outreach, historic demonstrations and taking part in public events. She is berthed at Pier 1 of the former Charlestown Navy Yard at one end of Boston's Freedom Trail.



Col. Charles S. Dunston, Western Sector commander, climbs the ropes of the USS Constitution, much as Marines did at sea 200 years ago.

After the change of command, Dunston "climbed the ropes" in a re-enactment of original Marine Guard "at sea" duties. The only thing missing was his musket and bayonet. He joined Cooper in the "tops" and for great view of Boston Freedom Trail.

FAMILY

Atlanta daughter gets a glimpse of medical processing

When the Jonesboro, Ga., Middle School took part in the national "Bring Your Child to Work Day," Jonathan Dixon, an Atlanta MEPS lead health technician, brought his 12-year-old daughter, Bobbi, to work with him.

As she shadowed her father as he worked in the medical section, Bobbi observed the medical briefing and collecting blood samples. She also watched vision and hearing tests, and practiced some ortho-neuro exercises.

The program is set up for parents to show their children what they do at work. Children often don't know what their parents do during their daily work schedules.

Also, the program provides them with a first-hand opportunity to see the possibilities of future employment with an adult perspective on available career fields.



Jonathan Dixon and his daughter, Bobbi.

Banquet brings military and educators together again — for the twenty-second year!

By Capt. Jeromy Spellings
Memphis MEPS Executive Officer

For the 22nd year, the Memphis MEPS and recruiting commanders continued to strengthen their relationship with local educators hosting an awards banquet for 155 counselors, principals, school board and PTA members and other dignitaries.

The event was narrated by J.B. Smiley, Memphis MEPS education services specialist and Kim Jessee, president of the West Tennessee Counseling Association.

Educators from Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas gathered at a local hotel. Some traveled as far as 140 miles for the event. During the meal, entertainment was provided by the White Station High School jazz band.

Capt. Eric Johnson, chief of staff for Navy Recruiting Command, was the keynote speaker. He spoke about the high quality men and women who are joining the United States military and emphasized how important counselors are to career explo-

ration and career planning needs of students. He told the story of how a high school counselor helped him decide to pursue a Navy career.

During the awards portion of the banquet, Maj. Travis Jones, Memphis MEPS commander, and the recruiting commanders presented certificates of appreciation to counselors and principals who provided outstanding support for the ASVAB Career Exploration Program and recruiting.

The commanders gave special recognition for two who have given exceptional support to the program. Vachenzia McKinney of Overton High School and Mary Ann Fisher of Whitehaven High School received the USMEPCOM Commander's Award of Merit.

Fisher also received a special award from the Tennessee Army National Guard presented by Lt. Col. Andy Easterly and Maj. Richie Gammons. The West Tennessee Counseling Association and Tennessee Counseling Association presented the Tennessee Counseling

Association Presidential Award to Lt. Col. Michael Romero, IRC chairman, and Jones for outstanding testing and recruiting support. The commanders were assisted by Sgt. 1st Class Erik McConnell, Memphis MEPS senior enlisted advisor; Ray Johnson, test coordinator; and Petty Officer 2nd Class Ronald Penrod, testing specialist.

The counseling association recognized outstanding counselors for the secondary, middle school and elementary levels. The awardees were Dr. Jeffrey Taylor, Martin Luther King Transition Center; Earnestine Benton, Westside Middle School; Lauren Pierotti, Rivercrest Elementary School; and Bob Loos, Private Practice Counseling. Jessee, outgoing president of the West Tennessee Counseling Association, received the association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Conversations among educators and military personnel showed new and renewed support for the ASVAB Career Exploration Program and recruiting.



Awards banquet guests included counselors, principals, school board and PTA members, college professors and inter-service recruiting commanders. (Right to left) Dr. Jeffrey Frieden, Ray Johnson, Redell Holmes, Regina Lacey, Kim Jessee, Loretta Warren, Donna Cooper, Vachenzia McKinney, Mary Ann Fisher, Josie Camper, Earnestine Benton, Taisha Simmons, Mary Brignole, Debra Fitzgerald, J.B. Smiley, Carl Johnson, Ernest White, Lt. Col. Michael Romero, Lauren Pierotti, Staff Sgt. Lakesha Thompson, Bob Loos, John Mitchell, Carolyn Lester, Kevin Meeks, Margeret Schingle, Felicia Lee, J.B. Booker, Lille Pinkston, Joann Boyd, Sonja Sanes, Maj. Travis Jones, Dr. Sondra Long, Lashonda Norman, Mary London, Rhonda Hill, Peggy Barber, Capt. Eric Johnson, Dr. Jeffrey Taylor, Bret Lawson, Lt. Col. Wayne Hill, Stan Collins, Roy Hazzell, Lou Gettings, Capt. Jeromy Spellings, Capt. Thomas McGoldrick, Capt. Daniel Deatrick, Marcus Heaston, Lt. Col. Andy Easterly, Cmdr. Michael Neuser.

Company Grade Officer of the Year

1st Lt.

Raphael J. Trujillo
Lansing MEPS

First Lt. Raphael J. Trujillo is the USMEPCOM Company Grade Officer of the Year. He is the assistant operations officer at the Lansing MEPS.

As the assistant operations officer, Trujillo supervises four military enlisted members and 10 civilian employees in the information



technology, medical and processing sections. During the year, he oversaw nearly 4,000 accessions, more than 3,500 entries into the delayed entry program, nearly 9,000 Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Batteries and more than 6,100 medical examinations. Through his oversight of the management control program self-and cross-inspections, the lieutenant enabled the Lansing MEPS to achieve compliance on three staff assistance visits.

Trujillo improved the Student Testing Program marketing plan by creating a data base using Google Earth, making it easier to track schools visited, their status and where they are located in relation to one another. He also marketed to

Senior Enlisted Military Member of the Year

Sgt. 1st Class
Almeter Thompson
Headquarters

Sergeant 1st Class Almeter Thompson is the USMEPCOM Senior Enlisted Military Member of the Year. She is the Army liaison and human resources NCOIC,



Directorate of Human Resources (J-1) at USMEPCOM Headquarters.

Thompson is the resident expert for all Army personnel issues affecting the command. She briefs the USMEPCOM commander on issues related to the senior rater profile and the command sergeant major on enlisted assignments, incoming personnel and senior enlisted advisors. She mentors, coaches and trains three soldiers on skills critical to maintaining proficiency in their military occupational specialties and provides updates when important information is published.

Enlisted Military Member of the Year

Staff Sgt.
Demetris Redfield
Fort Lee MEPS

Staff Sergeant Demetris Redfield is the USMEPCOM Enlisted Military Member of the Year. She is the lead test administrator at the Fort Lee MEPS.



She conducted 20 percent of the station's CAT-ASVAB sessions with no administrative errors. She directed 316 test sessions, an average of 31 error-free tests per session. She helped increase efficiency by 25 percent by helping the testing section reduce the turnaround for student test results from four days to three. She helped the recruiting commands meet their missions by administering 30 percent of all special tests.

Redfield ensured 253 special category tests were completed, supporting 450 recruiters and 17 liaisons. She assisted the test control officer in cutting costs at nine military entrance test sites. She made valu-

more than 140 schools that were not taking part in the Career Exploration Program. The lieutenant supervised implementing two new vendor contracts and two processing programs to improve customer service.

In addition to his regular duties, Trujillo led the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Program during training days. He helped organize a mobile military exchange and commissary visit that allowed military members and veterans to take advantage of those benefits.

The lieutenant captained the 2010 USMEPCOM Army 10-miler team, and finished in the top five in the 2009 race. He volunteered to be the auxiliary information technology specialist and completed train-

ing so he could support the MEPS when the information technology specialists weren't available. He was platoon leader, acting commander and supervisor for urban terrain training and convoy training for another unit while also performing his primary duties in the MEPS.

Trujillo completed the first semester of the Michigan Army National Guard and Michigan State University Homeland Security Pilot Program. He was an honor graduate for the Total Army Training Instructor Course. He completed more than 60 hours of online training in six separate areas and 80 hours of training to obtain CPR and medical first responder certification.

In the wider community, Trujillo

is a volunteer firefighter. He is a community organizer for three Feeding America food trucks that serve more than 170 families. He volunteered as a member of the board of directors for a humanitarian organization. He is a Junior Achievement mentor for third grade students. He organized and developed a community-based summer camp that served 35 children.

"The epitome of a team player, 1st Lieutenant Trujillo consistently exceed the threshold for teamwork and outstanding customer service," Lt. Cmdr. Steven G. Rodriguez, Lansing MEPS commander, said. "He is committed to improving and enhancing the quality of life for the MEPS staff members and their families."

People from the headquarters, sectors and MEPS seek her advice on personnel issues and her ability to resolve issues affecting soldiers' careers. Thompson coordinates all visits with Human Resources Command and the Department of the Army and has established a strong network with other agencies that allows USMEPCOM to be efficient and effective. She has practical knowledge of the command's strategic plan and its emphasis on applying it to objectives which affect the command's people, how it conducts business and the technology needed to accomplish those things. She has

made efforts to learn about the Virtual Interactive Processing System and e-Security as the command moves forward.

Thompson earned a master's degree in human resource development from Webster University with a 4.0 grade point average and is pursuing a master's degree in managerial leadership. She earned teaching certification from Robert Morris University.

She is a voting member on the command's human capital panel. She takes part in ceremonies at local schools, which highlights military service and increases community

awareness. Thompson represents the command as a counselor for military retirees at the North Chicago Veterans Affairs Hospital and is the team leader for the program that evaluates and assesses ideas from the field concerning MIRS and VIPS.

Thompson is a mentor for a third grade class at a local school. She volunteered more than 400 hours as a liaison with the Heart Association and more than 500 hours as a role model and counselor assisting battered women at a local shelter. She has also worked with the Meals on Wheels program for the North Chicago VA Hospital.

able inputs to the recruiter orientation program and supported more than 50 newly assigned recruiters. She helped reduce test scoring times, improving efficiency by 30 percent. She helped the education services specialist and test control officer increase the Student Testing Program production by adding 12 new schools in 2010. She graded more than 1,200 tests conducted off site with no errors, the first time it had been done in four years.

She helped the test control officer optimize the use of MET sites through Office of Personnel Management training and avoid conflicts in the Student Testing Program. She

purged records every 30 days, cross-checked for duplicates and ensured records compliance from all MET sites. She maintained 100 percent accountability for controlled test materials and helped the MEPS attain 118 percent of its student testing goal.

Redfield earned a bachelor of arts degree from Park University with a 3.6 grade point average. She used training she received through the Department of Defense Sanitation Training Course to protect the health of the MEPS staff. She used her education to re-write and organize seven quick-reference guides for special tests. After studying

Amusement Vending Machine Fund regulations, she led 12 volunteers in executing three major functions. Redfield completed a database management course pertaining to information technology operations and managed more than 40 testing computers with no errors.

She organized seven large readiness support group fund raisers, netting more than \$2,000 to support 43 people. She was a key leader for the Martin Luther King and Black History Month celebrations. She donated food and non-perishable items to support 200 local people through the Salvation Army.

Civilian of the Year GS-10 and Above Jerry H. Cross Knoxville MEPS

Jerry H. Cross is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above. He is the education services specialist at the Knoxville MEPS.

Cross has ensured the Knoxville MEPS exceeded its Student Testing Program recruiter lead goal for seven years in a row – the only MEPS to achieve that. He was responsible for testing more than 9,500 high



school juniors and seniors. In all, 144 of a possible 179 high schools took part in the program, a 79.6 percent penetration rate, compared to the command average of 55 percent. His Career Exploration Program penetration rate for juniors and seniors was 14.4 percent, exceeding the command rate of 5.9 percent. He added three schools to the program through a grass-roots approach to school counselors. Two of the schools hadn't tested in seven years.

He was hand-picked to represent the command at the American School Counselor Convention in Boston. He made presentations to East Tennessee State University, Lincoln Memorial University, Carson-Newman College and the University of

Civilian of the Year GS-7 – 9 April M. Wise Phoenix MEPS

April M. Wise is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-7-9. She is a supervisory human resources assistant at the Phoenix MEPS.

Wise has built a strong team of 13 civilians and two military members at the fifth largest MEPS in Western Sector. She was responsible for enlisting more than 5,000 applicants into the delayed entry program



and sending more than 5,600 people to recruit training centers in fiscal 2010. She overhauled the training programs for lead human resources assistants, human resource assistants and travel assistants emphasizing professional development and cross training to provide flexibility in processing.

She coordinated fingerprint training with USMEPCOM Headquarters and the FBI to ensure the MEPS unclassifiable fingerprint rate remained below 2 percent. She traveled to the San Jose MEPS to provide fingerprint training, which resulted in San Jose's unclassifiable rate dropping from 4.24 percent to 1.39 percent in one month. Wise provided VIPS

Civilian of the Year GS-6 and Below Crystal S. Mitchell-Tilson Baltimore MEPS

Crystal S. Mitchell-Tilson is the USMEPCOM Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below. She is a health technician at the Baltimore MEPS.



She is credited with improving morning processing and meeting all deadlines. Mitchell-Tilson trained her co-workers on the proper use of the ear lavage machine which led to a 99 percent in-house success rate. She assisted the morning team leader and processed nearly 2,000 physical examinations. She volunteers to work beyond her scheduled hours to ensure the MEPS accomplishes its mission.

Mitchell-Tilson created a medical processing flow chart for applicants more than 40 years old. She is profi-

Tennessee, teaching future educators about the Student Testing Program and its benefits. He helped the testing section maintain no test loss or compromise while it administered more than 5,500 ASVABs and 460 special tests, which was critical to the station achieving MEPS of Excellence recognition three times. Cross used pre-test sign-up tables manned by MEPS staff members at 21 schools to offset a drop in mandatory testing. The early sign-ups increased the number of students testing by 20 percent.

Cross conducted three center of influence functions and provided Career Exploration Program interpretations at 63 schools. He trained five staff members to help with signing

up students for testing and post-test interpretations, which allowed the MEPS to exceed its student testing goal. He traveled to two other MEPS to help with mega test days and helped both exceed their annual goals. He personally conducted training for recruiters and Office of Personnel Management test administrators. His training of Kentucky National Guard recruiters led to increased testing in southeastern Kentucky.

He adapted his strategy in a changing political environment, which contributed to the MEPS being recognized at the battalion, sector and command levels. He attended the Civil War Leadership Tour at the Chattanooga National

Battlefield where he learned the effects of teamwork and personalities even in non-combat situations. He was elected to the Board of Directors for the Knoxville Civil War Roundtable, which teaches the community about local history and maintains Civil War sites.

“Mr. Cross’ service to the Knoxville MEPS is nothing less than impeccable,” Lt. Col. Eric B. Garretty, 8th Battalion commander, said. “He has demonstrated high standards of professional conduct, an excellent work ethic and unsurpassed customer service. He is one of the most dedicated and motivated individuals in the Knoxville MEPS and a key member of the 8th Battalion team.”

101 training to area field recruiters. She led monthly liaison meetings to promote better communications and processing for all services.

Wise revamped the quality review process, placing more emphasis on identifying errors and coordinating with the recruiting services to eliminate errors before applicants report to the MEPS. She developed bi-weekly training for section supervisors with the MEPS commander including scheduling, which improved professional development for MEPS leaders and coordination between sections. She developed an awards program that improved training, morale and team building. Wise emphasized MEPS of Excellence criteria and led her peers in

exceeding the standards. As a result, Phoenix MEPS received two quarterly awards, the first it had earned in more than five years.

She volunteered for training in the Career Exploration Program Post-Test Career Seminar, which provided greater flexibility in the Student Testing Program. Wise was selected and trained to serve as the 7th Battalion subject matter expert and improved communications between the battalion’s processing sections.

Wise served as president of the Amusement Vending Machine Fund committee and coordinated two holiday events and organization day. She earned a bachelor’s degree in

organizational management from Ashford University and is pursuing a master’s degree in addiction counseling from Grand Canyon University. She completed the Army Foundation and Basic Courses and is enrolled in the Intermediate Course. She also completed the Civilian Human Resources Agency Human Resources Course for Supervisors in Los Angeles.

Wise is a member of the National Association of Professional Women and was recognized as a “Woman in the Spotlight.” She was nominated for an Outstanding Team Member Award from the Chicago Federal Executive Board as a member of USMEPCOM’s Strategic Outreach Communications Group.

cient in all areas of medical processing and improved mission effectiveness and cohesion. She provided vital training by taking the lead on new command policies and regulations. She helped process more than 1,800 shippers and medical inspections through the medical section. Mitchell-Tilson streamlined medical operations and cut processing time by 45 minutes. She improved daily laboratory results processing, meeting all medical deadlines without any errors.

Mitchell-Tilson is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in nursing. She studied advanced health care ethics and used the knowledge to perfect performance of HIV and drug and alcohol testing. She completed a course on college of pathology laboratory testing and used knowledge gained from a second health care ethics course to improve laboratory operations.

She worked on the MEPS’ heritage celebrations and spoke at the Black History and Martin Luther King Day observances. She led orga-

nization day planning, arranging for music and face painting. The event was called the best ever by many of the 120 people who attended.

In the wider community, Mitchell-Tilson is an instructor and counselor for the Young Marines group serving more than 40 young people. She counseled 50 at-risk youths whose mothers were incarcerated. She is a team mom for a local softball team. Mitchell-Tilson is a sickle cell support group peer counselor at Johns-Hopkins Good Samaritan High School.

2010 USMEPCOM Awards - Runners Up

USMEPCOM Headquarters

Company Grade Officer of the Year
Lt. Col. Timothy L. Marriott
Operations Directorate/J-3

Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above
Thomas F. Buehring
Operations Directorate/J-3

Civilian of the Year, GS-7 — 9
Darryl Dickinson
Operations Directorate/J-3

Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below
Kimberly Christy
Operations Directorate/J-3

Western Sector

Company Grade Officer of the Year
Capt. Terri L. Zuber
St. Louis MEPS

Senior NCO of the Year
Master Sgt. Lorinda J. Pirrie
Los Angeles MEPS

Military Member of the Year
Staff Sgt. Jairo A. Mendez
Los Angeles MEPS

Civilian of the Year, GS-10 and Above
Vianna K. Larue
Amarillo MEPS

Western Sector

Civilian of the Year, GS-6 and Below
Carolyn S. Swinney
Oklahoma City MEPS

Eastern Sector

Senior NCO of the Year
Sgt. 1st Class John T. Huffman
Lansing MEPS

Civilian of the Year, GS-7 — 9
Myra M. Ellis
Tampa MEPS

MEPS of Excellence

The MEPS of Excellence Program acknowledges military entrance processing stations that obtain a level of excellence based on criteria related to USMEPCOM core processes (medical, testing, applicant processing) and general military readiness.

The two requirements to become a MEPS of Excellence are:

- To be one of the top three MEPS in each category.
- To meet the overall threshold.

The 65 MEPS are divided into three categories, based on historical data. MEPS remain in the designated category the entire fiscal year.

The MOE points system measures up to 10 criteria per quarter.

The criteria are:

- Timeliness of military evaluations and awards.
- Total students tested goal.
- Drug and HIV specimen processing.
- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Program.
- Physical fitness readiness.
- Height and weight standards.
- Electronic fingerprint capture station (unclassifiable fingerprints).
- Incidents of serious misconduct by military or civilian employees.
- Test loss compromise.
- Citibank travel card delinquency rates.

Third Quarter, Fiscal 2010

Category 1
Baltimore MEPS
Jacksonville MEPS
Phoenix MEPS

Category 2
Cleveland MEPS
Knoxville MEPS
Salt Lake City MEPS

Category 3
Fargo MEPS
Jacksonville MEPS
Omaha MEPS

Fiscal 2010

Category 1
Baltimore MEPS

Category 2
Knoxville MEPS

Category 3
Albuquerque MEPS

BOISE MEPS**Maj. Jeffrey T. Rosa**

Commander

Military service: 20 years

Last assignment: Chief of protocol, Office of Military Cooperation, U.S. Embassy, Kuwait
 Diversions: Spending time with his family, running, camping, hiking and volleyball
 First impression: "Impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the Boise MEPS staff as it sets the benchmark for all others to follow."

Cpl. Frank Guzman

Testing Specialist

Military service: 5 years

Last assignment: Twentynine Palms Marine Corp Air Ground Combat Center
 Diversions: Soccer, weekends with family
 First impression: "Friendly. Good working environment."

Jeremy Jeffries

Test Control Officer

Government service: 4 years

Military service: 11 years (Army)

Last assignment: Training support specialist, Training Support Center, Vilseck, Germany
 Diversions: Hunting, camping, skiing, fishing
 First impression: "Great atmosphere. Friendly and professional."

FORT LEE MEPS**Spring Cambric**

Human Resources Assistant

Government service: 3 years (continued)

Military service: 17 years

Last assignment: Joint Forces Headquarters, 91st Troop Command, Sandston, Va.
 Diversions: Comic books, video games, puzzles, spending time with and reading with/to my children.

First impression: "It's huge! It's not the MEPS I remember from the federal building in Richmond."

Capt. Christina Douglas

Operations Officer

Years of service: 13

Last assignment: Sacramento MEPS
 Education: Bachelor of science degree in psychology, master of science degree in administration of security and justice.
 Military Education: Medical Service Corps Officer Basic Course, Aviation Officer Basic Course, and Huey and Blackhawk Aircraft Qualification Courses.
 Diversions: Running, hiking, biking and reading.

First impression: "Great organization."

Novia Johnson

Human Resources Assistant

Years of military service: 22

Last assignment: Columbus, Ohio

Education: Associate degree
 Diversions: Reading, church and spending time with family.

First impression: "Everybody was friendly and helpful. It seems like a great place to work."

Mashia Owens

Human Resources Assistant

Government service: 2 years

Military service: 6 years

Last assignment: 240th Quartermaster Battalion, Fort Lee.

Education: Bachelor of science degree

Diversions: Exercising, movies, reading and dining out.

First impression: "I felt a warm welcome."

Habibah Prevost

Test Score Technician

Years of military service: 21

Last assignment: Army Office of the Inspector General.

Diversions: Music, family activities, traveling.

First impression: "Friendly environment."

LOUISVILLE MEPS**Tech. Sgt. Elizabeth J. Stone**

Testing NCO

Previous assignment: Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

Years of service: 13

First impression: "Awesome!"

FOND FAREWELLS**BOISE MEPS****Maj. Connie May**

Commander

Military Service: 20 years

Departing for: Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

Award: Defense Meritorious Service Medal

2nd Lt. Jacob Smith

Assistant Operations Officer/Test

Control Officer

Military service: 10 years

Departing for: Medical school, Ross University

Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal

Most remembered for: Wit and good humor.

Sgt. 1st Class William Tannler

Human Resources Assistant

Military service: 13 years

Departing for: Advanced Leadership Course instructor, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas

Petty Officer 1st Class Carrie Bale

Medical Technician

Military service: 12 years

Departing for: Individual Augmentation, Republic of Djibouti

Award: Joint Service Achievement Medal

Most remembered for: Technical expertise

Petty Officer 1st Class Douglas Wenner

Medical Technician

Military service: 6 years

Departing for: Pharmacy school, Campbell University

Award: Joint Service Commendation Medal

Most remembered for: Memorizing

USMEPCOM regulations

LOUISVILLE MEPS**Dennis M. Simpson**

Test Clerk

Civil service: 3 years

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Springfield's Elton John impersonator takes band on the road to troops in Iraq

By Shari McDanel
Springfield MEPS

You never know where following your passion will lead you.

For Greg Ransom, following his passion led him to a musical gig entertaining American troops in Iraq.

By day, Ransom is the lead medical technician at the Springfield MEPS. When the sun goes down, however, the former Air Force staff sergeant transforms into the leader of the Elton John tribute band, Bennie and the Jets.

Ransom's day job set the wheels in motion for the band's trip to Iraq.

Colonel Barrye Price, former Eastern Sector commander, happened to see Bennie and the Jets perform in a promotional video during one of his visits to the Springfield MEPS. Impressed, Price asked Ransom if he would like to entertain the troops in Iraq.

"Colonel Price thought that I would be perfect for entertaining the troops based on what he saw in the promotional video," Ransom said. He was then put in contact with people who coordinated the trip and the band was on its way.

The band, comprised of Dan Moraski, guitar; Mike Gibbs, bass guitar; and Steve Lawton, drums; and accompanied by Moraski's wife Nancy, "seamstress for the band," boarded a commercial airliner bound for Iraq May 22, and returned to the United States June 2.



Bennie and the Jets play for soldiers during their tour of Southwest Asia.

Bennie and the Jets performed four concerts – Camp Buehring in northwestern Kuwait; Camp Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq; Camp Victory in Baghdad, and finally, Contingency Operation Base Adder in Tallil, Iraq.

Active duty military or civilian contractors escorted the band in a military C-130 during their travels.

In addition to performing, the band toured much of Iraq and Kuwait. The highlight of which was a visit to the Great Ziggurat of Ur, birthplace of Abraham.

Ziggurats were massive monuments built in the ancient Mesopotamian valley and western Iranian plateau. They were terraced, step pyramids with successively receding stories or levels.

While in Iraq, the band stayed in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces.

"The palace was beautiful but underneath all the opulence, everything was junk," Ransom said.

The buildings constructed for Saddam Hussein are showy but were poorly built compared to what we see in the United States, Ransom said.

While Bennie and Jets' job in Iraq was to boost troop morale, Ransom found morale was already high.

"The morale of the troops was high from the very start," he said.



The band signs autographs between gigs.



Greg Ransom, in his Elton John persona, takes up a different kind of instrument.

“I was playing piano in a downtown hotel when the owner requested an Elton John song,” Ransom said. “I fumbled through, ‘I Guess That’s Why They Call it the Blues.’ After my performance, the owner told me that I sounded a lot like Elton John and suggested that I start up an Elton John tribute band.”

With a few of his musical friends, Ransom decided to combine his piano playing skills with his new Elton John voice and form Bennie and the Jets.

Ransom began work in the Springfield MEPS medical section in 1991.

He considers his MEPS job just as important as his musical career, and plans to continue to working at the MEPS and entertaining on the weekends.

Describing himself as “mild mannered Clark Kent by day and Captain Fantastic by night,” Ransom juggles his medical technician career with his career as an entertainer.

If Elton John retires from entertaining, however, Ransom says he will probably devote himself to Bennie and the Jets full time due to the increased demand he anticipates.

For more information on the band and photos and videos of the

“They have pool tables, recreation centers and swimming pools along with performances such as the ones we gave to keep the troop morale high,” he said.

The former Air Force NCO knows firsthand the need for rest and relaxation during deployments in hazardous areas.

While in Iraq, Ransom had the opportunity to sit down with Army Lt. Gen. Robert W. Cone, deputy commanding general for operations, United States Forces-Iraq.

“General Cone summed up the war in Iraq better than any politician or any... media reports. Some factions show great restraint but basically, we are not as hated by locals as our media makes it out to be,” Ransom said. “The conversation with General Cone was one of the most meaningful experiences of the trip.”

Cone thanked the band for its support and presented each band member with a command coin.

Bennie and the Jets formed in 1995 after Ransom was asked to perform an Elton John song.

trip to the Middle East, join them on Facebook or visit their website at Bennieandthejets.com.



Greg Ransom and his Elton John tribute band play an outdoor concert for soldiers in Southwest Asia.

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