



Army Sustainment Command

News Release

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By Jon Connor, ASC Public Affairs

Process Improvement Specialists earn LSS Master Black Belt certification

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, ILL. — Two Army Sustainment Command employees have attained the pinnacle in the Lean Sigma Six program, earning their Master Black Belts.

Sherry Weller and Thomas Ferguson, process improvement specialists with ASC Headquarters' Command Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office at Rock Island Arsenal, recently received certification as MBBs, the zenith of Lean Six Sigma certification within the Army. A ceremony honoring them was held March 25 at CACIO.

"It truly is a privilege to work with them [ASC personnel] on projects and see their passion and dedication to making a positive difference," Weller said of her work as a former Black Belt and now Master Black Belt. "Seeing that 'ah-ha' moment when a problem's root cause is discovered and the Belt's knowledge that they can correct a systemic issue is really rewarding."

"I feel very honored to stand beside other Army and industry Master Black Belts I have worked with and hold in great respect," Ferguson said of the top certification.

Weller, a 28-year Army civilian, is ASC's first MBB, certified on Feb. 12, becoming the 22nd Army MBB. Ferguson, a retired Army chief warrant officer 5 accumulating 30 years as a chief engineer in the transportation field with another eight years as an Army civilian, received his certification on March 4, advancing to 24th MBB position.

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The Army's goal is to have .5 percent of its workforce certified as MBBs. However, Army Materiel Command's vision is to have a minimum of two certified MBBs and an additional two MBB candidates "in the pipeline" at each major subordinate command, Ferguson and Weller said. As of March 9, there were 493 Black Belts throughout the Army.

The requirements for MBB certification are rigorous.

After first being certified as a Black Belt, Weller and Ferguson met the challenge of teaching two cycles of the four-week Department of the Army Black Belt program of instruction, conducting an LSS Project Identification and Selection workshop, coaching two other Black Belts to successful completion of their project and completing a second Black Belt level project for themselves.

Initially, Weller and Ferguson became LSS Black Belts about three years ago, passed the MBB exam in 2008, which then officially began their work toward becoming MBBs, they said.

As it turns out, making improvements is nothing new to Weller who has been working in quality management for the majority of her career.

Belts that were successfully coached by Weller and Ferguson include two of the 11 Department of the Army 2009 LSS Excellence Award Program winners in the Enterprise and Team Level project categories that were recognized earlier this year.

The combined benefits from Weller and Ferguson's projects resulted in a cost avoidance or savings of \$5,638,152 over the program years of the processes improved. Their coaching of four other belts to successful completion of projects resulted in a cost avoidance or savings of \$13,329,210 over the respective projects' program years, Weller said.

Their efforts resulted in a total of \$18,967,362 in cost avoidance or savings to the Army, as documented in PowerSteering, the system of record for LSS process improvement efforts throughout the Army, she added.

In addition to the financial benefits that ASC has received from their efforts, operational processes have been improved by as much as 248 percent through Weller and Ferguson's efforts.

“Building the Lean Six Sigma program will continue to take hard work and persistence and must be supported by senior leadership to be successful,” Ferguson said. “Lean Six Sigma is not the panacea for all of ASC's problems, but we have proven it does work. Commands across the Army are starting to realize the benefits of LSS as our programs have started to gain momentum.

“It is imperative that we use all the improvement tools available, especially Lean Six Sigma, if we gain operational control of the DOLs (Directorate of Logistics) to successfully deliver the equipment our Soldiers need and depend upon,” he said.

For their extraordinary efforts, MBBs receive a certificate and letter signed by the director, Office of Business Transformation, Lt. Gen. Robert Durbin, and a LSS MBB Challenge Coin with their respective serial numbers “00022” and “00024”.

In his letter, Durbin called MBBs “the respective commands’ ‘in-house’ experts for disseminating knowledge and training/coaching Army LSS Belt practitioners.”

The LSS concept embraces balancing quality and speed to help an organization focus on improving service quality, as defined by the customer, within a set time limit.

Leaner, more responsive, better quality and faster cycle time in the accomplishment of ASC missions are being achieved through the application of LSS and the skills of ASC's LSS belts.

Other ASC personnel who have been awarded Black Belt and Green Belt status are:

-- Troy Allen, team leader for the Resource Reporting Team, ASC G-8 (Resource Management) Resource Analysis Division, certified Green Belt March 19, 2009; Project title: *ASC DTS Funding Process*

-- Sherry Bowe, Lean Six Sigma specialist, ASC Command Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office, certified Black Belt June 18, 2009; Project title: *ASC – Improve Manpower Budget Process*

-- Maj. Michael Cherry, currently filling the contracting plans officer position, 407th Army Field Support Brigade, certified Black Belt Dec. 17, 2009; Project title: *AFSB Mandatory training*

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-- Robert Farr, program analyst in S-3 (Operations), 404th AFSB, certified as Black Belt June 24, June 2009; Project title: *Command Post System Integration Reset Cycle Time Reduction*

-- George Gray, Lean Six Sigma specialist, ASC Command Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office, certified as Black Belt Feb. 3, 2010; Project title: *Improve Governance of LOGCAP Source Documents*

-- Tina Grove, lead contract price/cost analyst at Rock Island Contracting Center, Army Contracting Command, certified as Green Belt, Jan. 16, 2008; Project title: *Improve Timeliness of Contracting Officer Warrant Issuance*

-- Edward Johnson, automotive quality assurance specialist, Quality Assurance Division, 403rd AFSB, certified as Green Belt, Jan. 6, 2010; Project title: *Fuel Flow Test*

-- Master Sgt. Patrick Knowles (now retired), currently a senior data analyst for Integrated Logistics Analysis Program, ASC Distribution Management Center, currently employed with the company Calibre at DMC, certified as Green Belt April 28, 2009; Project title: *Improve Financial Reporting Procedures for ASC Programs (Reset, Pre-Deployment Training Equipment, and Left-Behind Equipment)*

-- Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jose Marquez, chief, Logistics Support Team, 404th AFSB, certified as Black Belt June 17, 2009; Project title: *Streamlining the Directorate of Logistics Supply Operations*

-- Jennifer McCalester-Conner, budget analyst, Appropriated Funds Division, Resource Management, Joint Munitions Command, certified Green Belt March 19, 2009; Project title: *Field Support Personnel Fill Process*

-- Maj. Raul Rovira, chief, 4-25th Brigade Logistics Support Team, 404th AFSB, certified as Green Belt April 9, 2009; Project title: *Optimization of Printing/Copying Equipment*

-- Michael Shapiola, unit maintenance officer, currently deployed in Afghanistan with Corps of Engineers, certified as Green Belt Oct. 31, 2008; Project title: *2-401st AFSB Accident Reduction*

-- Maj. Brian Stehle, science & technology officer, 407th AFSB, certified as Black Belt Feb. 22, 2010; Project title: *AFSB Technology Integration*

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-- Col. Jesse Wade, director, Combat Service Support Operations, Support Operations, Army Materiel Command, certified as Green Belt, March 20, 2009; Project title: *ASC National Guard Bureau Synchronization*

-- Robert Waetke, systems engineer for Program Executive Office Integration, Armament Research Development and Engineering Center, certified as Black Belt July 10, 2008; Project title: *Fiscal Control of Class IX Repair Parts Requisition*

-- Mikhael Weitzel, deputy historian, ASC History Office, certified Black Belt June 10, 2009; Project title: *Annual History Quality and Readability*

-- Gene Wollum, process improvement specialist, ASC Command Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office, certified Black Belt July 15, 2008; Project title: *Fort Wainwright DOL Supply Requisition Process Standardization*

-- Chin Sang Yi, process improvement specialist, 403rd AFSB, certified Black Belt Jan. 6, 2010; Project title: *Fuel Flow Test*

(Sherry Weller and Elysa Otero, CACIO, contributed to this article.)

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