

# CITIZEN AIRMAN

Volume 74 No. 5

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**PAVING  
THE PATH** →  
←  
**FOR FUTURE  
PILOTS**

## MOVING FORWARD

“*Airpower is like oxygen. When you have enough, you don't have to think about it. When you don't have enough, that's all you can think about.*” — Gen. Frank Gorenc

Citizen Airmen,

As we roll into 2023, I want to take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments over the past year and share my observations with you. We have continued to prove ourselves to be an accessible, cost-effective and experienced force. We provided support to combatant commands and to our nation.

At the start of this year, as part of Task Force Iron Herk, more than 200 Reserve Citizen Airmen volunteered and provided airlift support to deliver critical supplies throughout the European Command area of responsibility to enable the defense of Ukraine. 2022 also saw the deployment of the KC-46 to EUCOM. Additionally, the 419th Fighter Wing deployed Airmen to Europe to enhance our readiness posture.

In addition to operations in Europe, we were busy at home as well. The Hurricane Hunters provided weather reconnaissance support to both named storms and the atmospheric river research mission. Additionally, we demonstrated our proficiency with agile combat employment by providing support to missions out of Homestead Air Reserve Base delivering vital supplies to the U.S. embassy in Port au Prince, Haiti.

In August, we published Air Force Reserve Command TASKORD 22-0001. The TASKORD established my strategic priorities of Ready Now! and Transforming for the Future. It also identified the key tasks at each level, from the individual up to Headquarters AFRC, to ensure we are making a unified effort to be ready as a part of the Air Force Reserve the nation needs to deter and defeat a peer adversary.

During my unit visits, I have observed firsthand the depth of knowledge and thoughtfulness with which all of you have implemented the TASKORD. After publishing the TASKORD, I visited both 4th Air Force at March Air Reserve Base and the 624th Regional Support Group at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam. Nearly every Reserve Citizen Airman I spoke with was familiar with what was expected of them as laid out in the TASKORD.

To provide more clarity on TASKORD implementation, the Air Force Reserve Enterprise Strategy was released in

November. It provides a roadmap for the Air Force Reserve through 2035. This strategy identifies three lines of effort to implement each priority.

To achieve the priority of Ready Now, we will focus on the following LOEs:

- **LOE 1** — 100% of AFRC Unit Type Codes in the “available” phase able to deploy within 72 hours
- **LOE 2** — 80% of AFRC units have resiliency programs implemented by the end of CY23
- **LOE 3** — Capitalize on AFFORGEN/Expeditionary Air Base capabilities

To achieve the priority of Transforming for the Future, we will focus on the following LOEs:

- **LOE 1** — Program strategic depth with surge capacity supporting emerging missions and capabilities
- **LOE 2** — Develop business intelligence and analytics at scale
- **LOE 3** — Foster Continuous Improvement and Innovation across the enterprise

Central to achieving the strategic priorities is Human Capital Management. HCM is a deliberate approach to ensure our units are structured and staffed appropriately to accomplish the mission. We have developed an HCM strategy to ensure our manning and recruiting efforts are focused on generating missions as well as ensuring a ready force. Growing the Airmen of the future requires a cohesive human capital strategy to synchronize the required resources to support our Airmen.

As we begin a new year, we will continue to focus on our strategic priorities and the LOEs outlined in our enterprise strategy. To that end, we recently published a strategic communication plan, which lays out how we will effectively communicate with target audiences about the Air Force Reserve's cost-effectiveness, accessibility, value and experience.

Strategic competition is a reality, and our nation will call upon us to deliver warfighting capacity. I need all of you to be ready to mobilize to provide the operationally relevant strategic depth at the time of need. I am both honored and proud to serve with each of you.

## CONSTRUCTIVELY OR PHYSICALLY PRESENT — WHAT TYPE OF LEADER ARE YOU?

Teammates, first and foremost, I wish you and your families a happy holiday season! Whether you're deployed abroad or in garrison, the holiday season provides a time for us to take a much-needed breath, and in some cases, it provides an opportunity to take a knee. It's a time to reconnect with family and friends while reflecting on what's truly important to each of us.

While the holidays are joyous for most, it can be stressful time for others. It can bring back fond memories or remind you of times you'd rather forget. Its important for us not to assume the mental or psychological state someone may be in, simply because we may be in a different space. Frequent and authentic communication around the holidays can make the world of difference for those around you.

Communication types are often described as written, verbal, and non-verbal (body language). Regardless of the communication venue or the type being used, it is important for leaders to be visible, authentic, and to do what is most often overlooked...listening actively.

The office landscape has changed a lot in the past two years because of the pandemic. Telework and other communication options have created connection gaps. We spend so much time emailing and texting, we don't spend enough time talking to one another. It's something the work force has grown accustomed to. If not careful, you will find yourself doing the same in your personal lives.

I specifically recall a recent time when I returned from a TDY and wanted to surprise my family with a nice family dinner I prepared. After verbally announcing dinner was ready with no response, I sent a group text to my wife and daughters. The three of them emerged from separate locations within the house, grabbed their food, and everyone continued in their separate ways. It dawned on me the communication default with my own family under the same roof, had become via text. I recalled thinking, 'Oh no...I've become one of those.'

It occurred to me that even though my family had gotten used to my physical presence when not traveling for work, they also got used

to me not being constructively present. My family had grown accustomed to doing things with or for themselves. I then decided I needed to make some changes within myself. Like many of us with demanding roles and responsibilities, it's work in progress and a constant struggle.

In no way am I the person to give anyone professional or personal relationship advice on the benefits of being constructively present. My batting average in this area is nothing to brag about...I'm hitting a solid .250 at best. However, I do know a difference exists between the two. For us to reach, while enabling others to reach their full potential both personally and professionally, we need to be constructively present.

The ability for a leader to positively impact the careers or personal lives of Airmen depends on trust. Building trust starts with a leader's ability to connect. Effective communication is a two-way street that requires an open mind to hear and attempt to understand someone else's point of view. Hearing does not automatically equate to listening. Active listening requires us to be constructively present.

The next time you want to reach out to a coworker in the same building, try walking down the hall instead of sending an email. The next time you want to reach a friend or loved one, try calling them instead of texting. The next time an Airman or coworker walks into your office, stop typing, close your laptop, and listen actively. The next time you are in the presence of Airmen, friends, or those you claim are most important to you, ask yourself if you are just physically present, or truly constructively present. If not the latter, reassess, readdress, and reattack.

Please continue to take care of yourselves, your families, and each other throughout the holiday season. As always, it is my honor and privilege to serve as your Command Chief.

**TIMOTHY C. WHITE JR.**  
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*Thanks to our contributors: Master Sgt. Kelly Goonan, a public affairs specialist assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick Space Force Base, Florida, is a frequent contributor to Citizen Airman magazine. Check out her latest story on some unusual loadmaster training on page 18.*



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# DOCTOR DUO

## BUILDS BRIDGE OF SERVICE

# AROUND THE WORLD

— By Staff Sgt. Jasmine Czajka

Ifiok Idem and Emem Idem faced a dilemma.

The young doctors were working at a small mission hospital in a remote Nigerian village when a patient arrived in dire need of surgery and a blood transfusion. The problem was there was not enough blood in the blood bank for the procedure.

Undeterred, Ifiok began the surgery while Emem made her way to the blood donation center to give her own

blood for the patient. She soon delivered her fresh blood to the operating room and continued the surgery while Ifiok went to donate his blood. With enough blood on hand, the doctors continued with the procedure and saved the patient's life. Most people would consider what the young doctors did that day to be heroic. ... but not the Idems. To them, it was just one more chapter in a life devoted to serving others.

Their goal to live a life of service has led the Idems to do many things, including becoming U.S. citizens and joining the Air Force Reserve.

"We have been doctors in the United States for 12 years, and for 11 years in Nigeria before that," said Maj. (Dr.) Ifiok Idem, a flight surgeon with the 507th Medical Squadron, Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma. "We've always, always been people of service, and it's never been about what is in it for us." Emem is also an Air Force Reserve major and flight surgeon assigned to the 507th MDS.

They began their medical careers in their home country of Nigeria, and Ifiok said that the happiest he and Emem have ever been in their medical careers was when they were working for almost no money at the mission hospital in their home country.

"There's something about service that just shows you who you are," Emem said. "We always find ourselves drawn to helping the underprivileged, the vulnerable, the poor, the medically underserved. And the only effective way to make a difference for them, and in life, is to serve."

It took the Idems nine years to become U.S. citizens, but once they were able, they both decided to join the Air Force Reserve to continue their life of service to others and to give back. The couple said they feel honored to be able to send money back home to their families and many others in their home towns.

"Our gratitude comes from being able to have career fulfillment, personal development, family fulfillment and the financial ability to change lives tremendously," Ifiok said. "This is a very special country with a very special mission, and there is none

like it in all of the world. We are very proud to be American citizens now."

In addition to serving others, the Idems said they enjoy meeting people from other countries and learning about their cultures.

"We came into the military to look for how we can build peace, build love, inspire and comfort people whether they are in the military or not," Ifiok said. "If we can be peacemakers between Nigeria and the United States through the military, then we can build a bridge, and it's not going to stop with the Air Force. We want to spread that love and peace around the world."

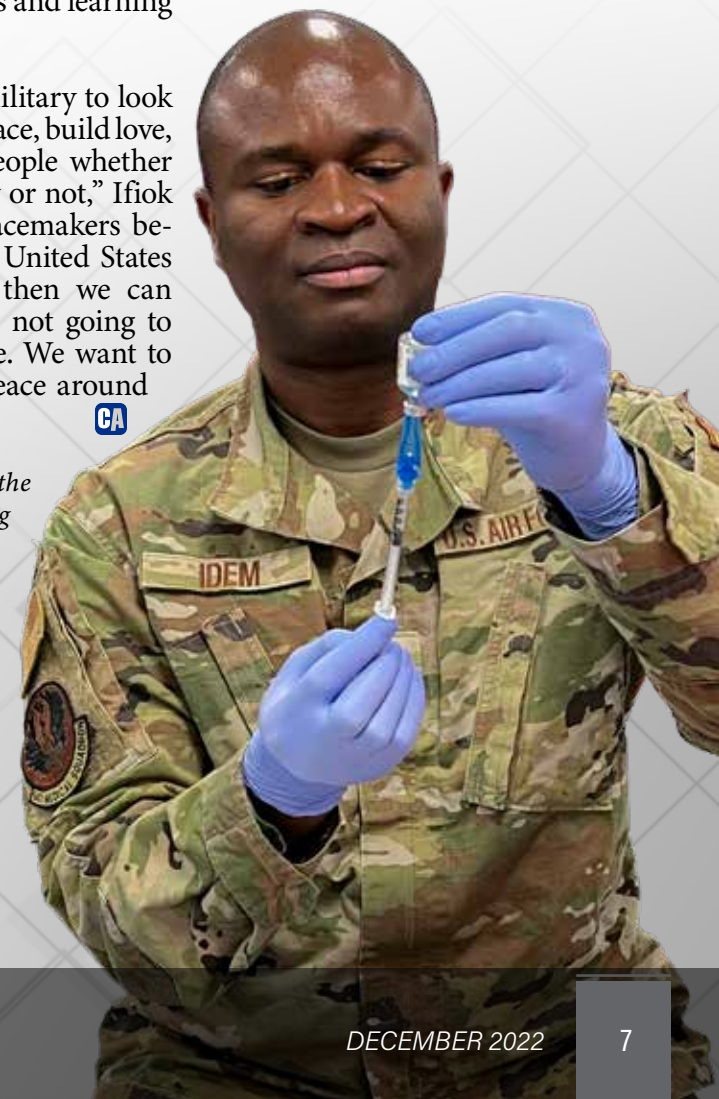
*(Czajka is assigned to the 507th Air Refueling Wing public affairs office.)*



CA



Maj. (Dr.) Emem Idem and Maj. (Dr.) Ifiok Idem, flight surgeons with the 507th Medical Squadron, Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, have dedicated their lives to serving others. (Staff Sgt. Jasmine Czajka)



# COLLABORATING IN THE ER: MEDICS ASSIST, LEARN IN COMMUNITY HOSPITALS



— Story and photos by Senior Airman Jonathan Stefanko

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic – when there were no vaccines, a shortage of health care workers and hospitals were beyond capacity — the U.S. health care system needed help. The Department of Defense answered the call, embedding thousands of service members in civilian hospitals nationwide.

With increased immunizations and a return to a near pre-pandemic normal, the last DoD military medical team responding to the COVID-19 crisis concluded its clinical mission on March 30, marking the end of a two-year-long story for most units. However, for Air Force Reserve Command, it means a new chapter at Mercy hospitals across the Midwest.

On July 18, HQ AFRC, working in conjunction with the 932nd Airlift Wing, located at Scott Air Force Base, near Belleville, Illinois, signed a Training Affiliation Agreement with the St. Louis-based Mercy Health System. TAAs offer military members the opportunity to improve their skills by working alongside their civilian counterparts. While these agreements exist elsewhere, they tend to be limited in scale and access.

The new TAA with Mercy is unique in that it offers all Reserve Citizen Airmen medics from across

the country the ability to train at any of the 12 approved Mercy hospitals.

One Airman from Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, recently excitedly took the opportunity to relocate to Missouri for six weeks, working alongside the Mercy medical staff and providing exceptional care to the St. Louis community.

“I learned a lot in the time I’ve been working at Mercy,” said Senior Airman Ursula Lindsey, an aerospace medical technician assigned to Maxwell’s 908th Airlift Wing. “But the most impressive and encouraging highlight is that everyone, whether a doctor, nurse or other staff, takes the time to make every moment a teaching moment. Even when the hospital gets extremely busy, everyone at Mercy always looks out for each other, and they extend that same hospitality to us – the Airmen.

“It’s a wonderful program. There’s nothing else like it,” Lindsey continued. “The training we receive here is invaluable. While the military offers a lot, there are just some medical scenarios that we’d only be able to experience and work through in a civilian hospital, compared to a military clinic.”

### Two Uniforms, One Team

While the AFRC-wide TAA was signed early this year, the collabo-

ration between the 932nd AW and Mercy traces back more than a decade. It’s easy to spot the military members taking part in the partnership. While they don a light blue scrub top with “Mercy” inscribed across the breast pocket, you’d be hard pressed to miss their military-issued camouflage pants and coyote brown boots.

“When starting the program, we had to decide what our Airmen would wear – scrubs or their uniform,” said Lt. Col. Ed Hubbell, 932nd Aeromedical Staging Squadron officer-in-charge of consolidated training. “It’s a seemingly insignificant choice to make; but in reality, that couldn’t have been further from the truth. They could be misinterpreted as a Mercy co-worker if they wore all scrubs. However, a full military uniform may be too much in a civilian setting. So, we decided that the image we wanted to portray was a blend of both worlds. They’d don a Mercy top while staying unmistakably military.”

As the program grew over the years, so did the number of Reserve Citizen Airmen continuing their medical training at Mercy.

“The 932nd has been with us for so long that it’s hard to believe they weren’t always a part of the Mercy team,” said Robyn Weilbacher, Mercy Hospital St. Louis chief nursing officer. “It’s natural for us to walk into

a department and see the Airmen working there or in the cafeteria just like any other co-worker.

“I like to think that we’ve brought them into the Mercy family and gotten to know them as people, not just someone who comes to help us for a short time. Yeah, they’re Reservists and they’ll leave, but the Airmen here share our values, and I hope they feel as much a part of the Mercy team as we do.”

### Preparing Today for the Battle Tomorrow

Unlike active-duty Airmen, who do the same job daily, Reserve Citizen Airmen live dual lives. Often, this distinction brings new perspectives, skills and ideas that contribute to AFRC’s culture of diversity. However, this also means Reservists may not always get the training or experience they need to be effective in a deployed setting.

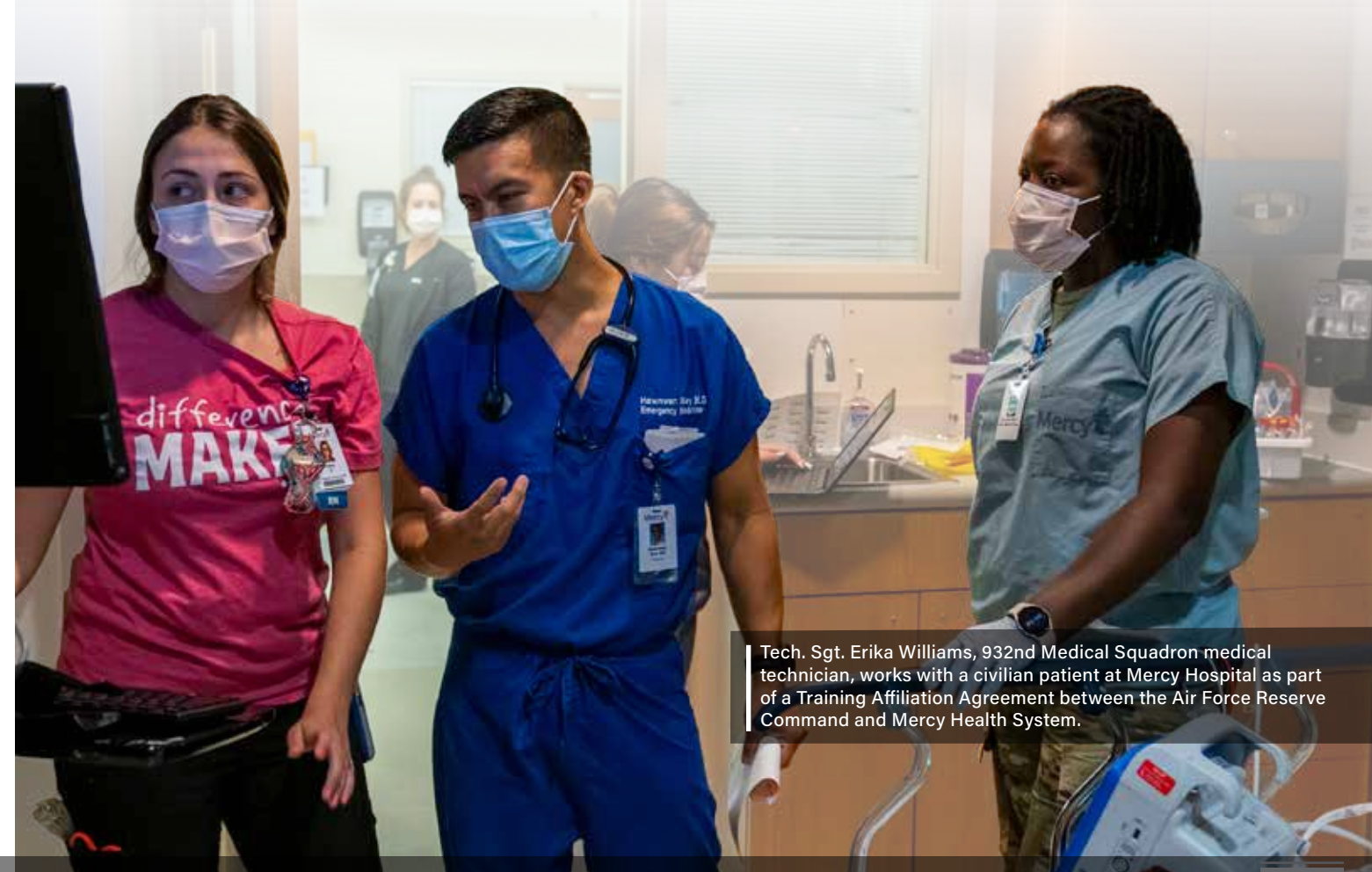
“A vast majority of our Reserve medical technicians do not work in a hospital setting in their civilian employment,” said Col. Karen Steiner, AFRC Command Nurse. “Many are teachers, truck drivers, students. They don’t get the hands-on training and opportunities that an active-duty Airmen would receive.

“So, having this TAA in place with Mercy truly opens the door of opportunity for our Citizen Airmen to go gain the training and real-world experience they desperately need. While here, they are in the emergency room, in the intensive care unit, working with patients requiring various medical care. These are all experiences and skills that will help them be effective downrange.”

Master Sgt. DeShae Clinton, a medical technician with the 932nd Aeromedical Staging Squadron, is a professional care provider through and

through. She has 17 years of military experience, all in the medical career field, and has deployed as a combat medic twice in her career. Clinton has been with Mercy since April, working as a liaison between the hospital and AFRC, ensuring that incoming Airmen receive their upgrade training and experience different areas throughout the hospital.

“The Airmen who come here are always eager to learn,” Clinton said. “They may not always get the opportunity on the floor or work with other med techs and engage with patients at their home station. Often, these Airmen don’t do anything medical in their civilian world, so when they come here, you see them grasp all the skills they can. I love to see it!”



Tech. Sgt. Erika Williams, 932nd Medical Squadron medical technician, works with a civilian patient at Mercy Hospital as part of a Training Affiliation Agreement between the Air Force Reserve Command and Mercy Health System.



# WING HELPS HOMELESS AIRMAN GET BACK ON HIS FEET

— By Master Sgt. Bob Jennings



Senior Airman Dianna Jefferson, 908th Medical Staging Squadron, conducts medical training at a Mercy Health System hospital. Below: Williams works with a civilian patient.

## Challenges to a Lasting Legacy

In a recent *U.S. News and World Report* article, the American Nurses Association said that the nation would need an additional 1.2 million nurses by next year to meet the growing demand.

Yet, military treatment facilities continue to close and downsize, leaving military families to transition to a civilian health care system that may not be ready for the additional patients.

Training agreements like the one between AFRC and Mercy may be the answer – augmenting the shortage of civilian medical professionals with their military counterparts.

“Having these Airmen with us is a huge benefit to Mercy as a whole,” Weilbacher said. “The support they bring is amplified whenever we’re shorthanded on staff. They truly step up, integrate into the departments and work with us as a team. It means everything to us.”

While this agreement benefits everyone involved, it does not come

without obstacles, the biggest of which is funding.

“There are many moving pieces when working with an organization as vast as Mercy,” said Chief Master Sgt. Rebecca Marrs, AFRC’s Aerospace Medical Service 4N functional manager. “Communication is always a challenge, and ensuring the resources exist to continue this program is a struggle. It’s not detrimental. The program is not only surviving, but thriving. However, we must constantly keep these things in mind and balance.”

While challenges exist, Hubbell, who is credited with starting this collaboration, hopes to see the program continue to grow and flourish.

“It’s incredibly gratifying to see not only Mercy embrace the program, but the opportunities for the military too,” Hubbell said. “While serving in the first and second Gulf War, I saw people struggle with their clinical skills. Agreements like this ensure our Airmen are adequately trained to support anything they may experience downrange. It’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

“I’m also pleased to see how far this program has evolved in almost 20 years. It’s not just one unit or three, but now the entire Air Force Reserve has the same opportunities as the 932nd. I’m greatly honored that I had the chance to build this program and see what it’s become today. Even though I’m nearing military retirement, this Mercy-Air Force relationship is far from ending. The story has merely started, and I can’t wait to see where it goes from here.”

(Stefanko is assigned to the 932nd Air-lift Wing public affairs office.)



When Staff Sgt. Nic Johnson had to move into his car after getting let go from his job, he realized he was in a bad spot. He had no house, no family to lean on and no job outside his work as a traditional Reservist firefighter with the 442nd Civil Engineer Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. And to top it all off, his car started to have issues.

“I was at the end of my rope,” Johnson said. “I had nowhere to go, and thought, ‘I need help.’”

So, to combat the depression and anxiety that stemmed from his situation, Johnson turned to Carol Ameline, the 442nd Fighter Wing’s director of psychological health. In addition to helping get him to a better place mentally, the DPH walked Johnson down the hall to speak with the Military and Family Readiness office — formerly Airman and Family Readiness.

“I think he had a lot more going on than he thought,” said Elizabeth Rutherford, the director of M&FR.

Through multiple visits over the course of a few weeks, Rutherford and Tech. Sgt. Austin Sims, a Transition Assistance Program liaison on loan to M&FR from the 442nd Medical Squadron, built a plan to help Johnson get back on his feet.

Sims helped Johnson secure \$2,700 in need-based grants to repair his car and even gave him a ride to the mechanic to pick it up.

“He was there to be a good friend when I needed it most,” Johnson said.

The M&FR team could have easily shaken Johnson’s hand at that point and patted themselves on the back for a job well-done. But that’s not the kind of office they run.

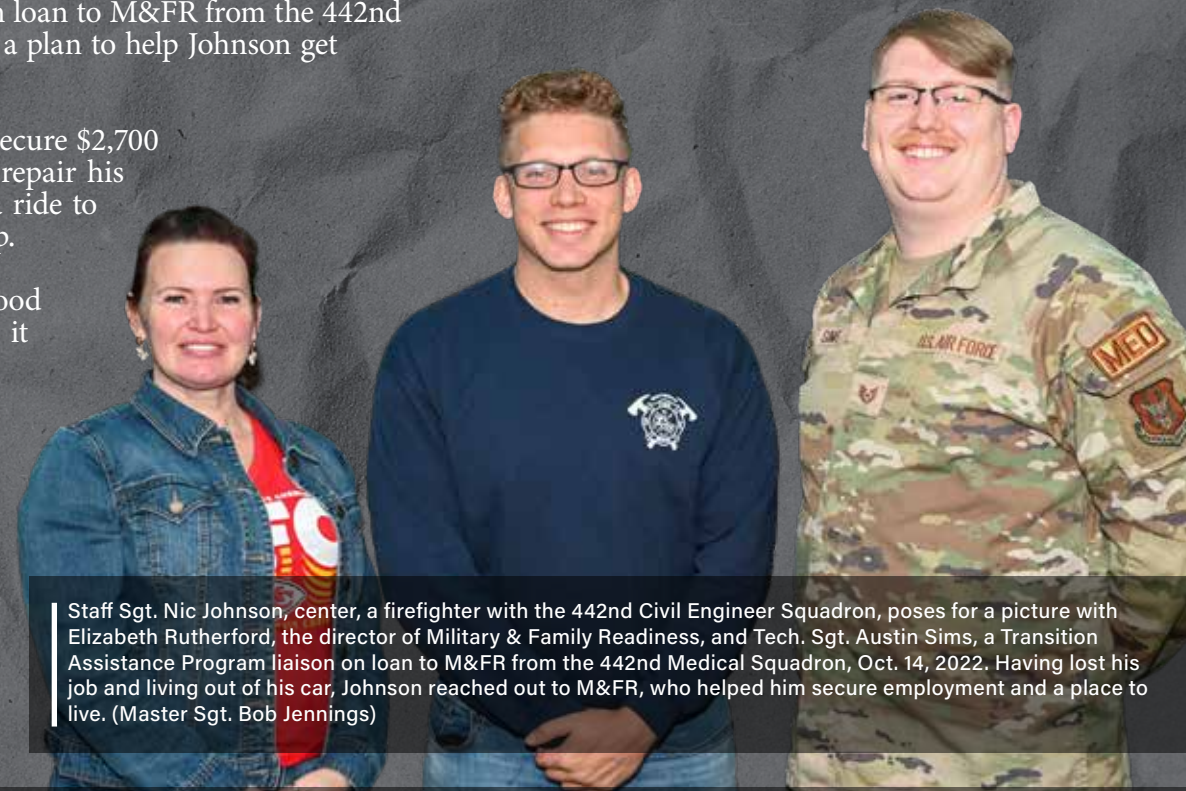
“We sat down and talked and built a plan, then chipped away at it,” Rutherford said.

The team helped Johnson build a resume that landed him a full-time job as a firefighter in Peoria, Illinois. They found ways to help him rebuild his credit, which had taken some serious hits recently. And if that weren’t enough, they also helped him find and secure an apartment.

“I knew I was better than where I was,” Johnson said, “So I was willing to get help where I could. It’s hard to keep track of how many people helped me. The unit really helped me. It was the best help I’ve ever had from a unit.”

As Reservists, it can be easy to forget that there’s more to a coworker’s life outside the one weekend a month they’re on base. A brave face on a unit training assembly weekend can mask significant struggles during the month. It’s important to be alert to signs of hardship in fellow Airmen and to help guide them toward the wealth of resources wings have available to help them.

(Jennings is assigned to the 442nd Fighter Wing public affairs office.)



Staff Sgt. Nic Johnson, center, a firefighter with the 442nd Civil Engineer Squadron, poses for a picture with Elizabeth Rutherford, the director of Military & Family Readiness, and Tech. Sgt. Austin Sims, a Transition Assistance Program liaison on loan to M&FR from the 442nd Medical Squadron, Oct. 14, 2022. Having lost his job and living out of his car, Johnson reached out to M&FR, who helped him secure employment and a place to live. (Master Sgt. Bob Jennings)



# RESERVE PHILANTHROPIST DEVELOPS E-COURSE TO HELP OTHERS FLY

— By Carolyn Herrick

When she was a little girl, Capt. Kristin “Nikki” Bodie, 77th Air Refueling Squadron KC-46 pilot at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, used to lay in the grass with her grandmother on their farm in rural Saluda, South Carolina, and watch the fighter jets from nearby Shaw Air Force Base and McEntire Joint National Guard Base fly overhead, wondering where they were going and what it would be like to fly through the clouds.

Her journey to become an Air Force pilot took years, and she flew all around the world in order to reach her goal, but Bodie took the things she’s learned and developed an online course to help others find their path more easily.

## ‘Girls Don’t Fly Planes’

Bodie remembers sitting in church as young as 5 years old, hearing the preacher talk about serving in the military or as a missionary and thinking, “He’s talking about me. Someday, I am going to leave my family and serve.”

Her love of watching airplanes spurred a strong desire to fly them.

“Every time I mentioned becoming a pilot, teachers in school would say, ‘Girls don’t do that,’” Bodie said. “I didn’t know of any female pilots, so I believed them – until I got to college and a good friend took flight lessons and asked if I wanted to go on a flight.”

Bodie, who was attending Clemson University, immediately fell in love with being in the air.

Determined to become a professional pilot, she enrolled in a program at Embry Riddle University. Upon completion of her MBA in aviation management and obtaining her flight ratings, Bodie landed her first flying job doing aerial survey in a Cessna 172. As a brand new pilot, she was in charge of all aspects of each mission, from coordination to logistics, refueling and maintenance.

“That taught me a lot about myself as a person and pilot,” she said. “I was out there traveling the country by myself with nothing but my suitcase and this tiny little airplane. It put me out of my comfort zone and made me more confident.”

## Giving Back

After eight months, Bodie began flying mapping missions in the King Air 200s, working seven days followed by seven days off. Looking to fill her time off, Bodie found Wings of Hope, a humanitarian organization that flies to highly remote locations to provide lifesaving care interventions to people who never have a chance to see a doctor.

This mission was close to her heart for personal reasons.

“When I was around 8 years old, I watched my cousin Loren struggle through leukemia, so it meant a lot to me to fly these missions,” said Bodie. “When my cousin died, it was so impactful; my entire life, I knew I needed to give back.”

As the only young woman volunteering, Bodie had to work hard to build her credibility there.

“I would clean the hangar, mop, and trade apple dumplings and pecan pie to learn,” she said.

There, she learned to weld, do engine overhauls, change gears, fabrication, upholstery and more. After a few months, she began flying children with terminal illnesses and disabilities around the country for treatment.

Bodie became more and more involved with Wings of Hope, eventually becoming a board member and assisting on a global level. She also started volunteering in the organization’s summer SOAR into STEM program, partnering with Boeing to bring high-risk youth into the hangar to mentor them.

“We would talk about the military and show them how to join and get college paid for, to help get them out of situations they’re in and into something fulfilling,” she said.

## Becoming a Citizen Airman

“Pretty much from the minute I first flew at Clemson in 2009, I wanted to join the military,” Bodie said. “For years, I tried to email my package to all the units I was interested in and was not getting any response.”

By 2015, Bodie was finished with her MBA, fully rated, and working for Republic Airlines as a first officer flying the Embraer 170. Through all those years, that nagging feeling that she would serve in the military never left.

Standing out among her peers with higher education and 3,000 flying hours, she was selected for Officer Training School and Undergraduate Pilot Training after a recruiter suggested Bodie put in an unsponsored package. Several squadrons called to interview her, and she joined the

916th Air Refueling Wing at Seymour Johnson as a KC-135R Stratotanker pilot.

“It was a backward way of doing things and a very hard way to get into the Reserve,” said Bodie, who jokes that she had to fly all the way around the world to get to her goal of serving in the military.

## Forging an Affordable Path for Others

Driven by a desire to help others streamline the process of obtaining a pilot’s license, joining the military and volunteering, Bodie found and connected with BogiDope, an aviation career consulting resource, and became their first female coach. For a year, Bodie researched and compiled all the best resources into “Affordable Paths for Launching Your Aviation Career,” a free e-course for aspiring aviators. It contains information about scholarships, guidance on how to create a winning application, in-depth explanations of military assistance programs for enlisted personnel, and information about tools and resources available to aspiring and current pilots.

“If it helps one person win a scholarship or figure a path they didn’t know about, the entire year working on it and years building up to it are worth it,” she said.

Bodie has helped several Airmen in her Reserve unit, including Senior Airman Antonio Frost, a KC-46 crew chief from Florence, South Carolina, who is entering his senior year of college hoping to commission and become a pilot.

“If she wasn’t helping me, I would probably be paying for the remainder of my flight hours out of pocket,” said Frost, who is in the process of applying for a \$20,000 scholarship with Bodie’s assistance. “She showed me the e-course for scholarships and



In addition to serving in the Reserve, Bodie flies the Airbus 320 as a first officer for American Airlines. (Courtesy photo)

grants and is helping me write an essay and submit other documents.”

While volunteering at a convention for military aviators, Bodie’s dream of flying for a major airline materialized. She now flies the Airbus 320 as a first officer for American Airlines in addition to her Air Force Reserve commitment and spends countless hours pouring into others through myriad philanthropic outlets. Bodie is now the vice president of the North Carolina chapter of Women in Aviation, which awards women scholarships to fly, internationally.

“I always thought my gift was aviation,” said Bodie. “During COVID when everything was paused, I had an epiphany: my gift is not flying, my gift is my compassion and my love for people and wanting to help them any way I can. God gave me airplanes as a vehicle to spread my compassion more. I would always do it, but with airplanes I can do it on a larger scale through the world.”

To access Bodie’s free e-course, visit <https://bogidope.com/courses/affordable/>

(Herrick is assigned to the 4th Fighter Wing public affairs office.)

Capt. Kristin “Nikki” Bodie developed a free online course to help others find resources to earn flying scholarships, join the military and volunteer. (Carolyn Herrick)





# GAME CHANGER

— By Gina Marie Giardina

## AERIAL PORTERS GET TO TEST WEIGHT-BEARING EXOSKELETON

The Air Force Research Laboratory’s Center for Rapid Innovation, or CRI, recently held an event with Air Force Reserve Command’s 445th Airlift Wing at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, to demonstrate the latest Forge System, a pneumatically-powered exoskeleton that augments leg strength to reduce fatigue, increase endurance and offset weight.

The event began with a presentation of the pneumatically-powered exoskeleton system.

Two aerial porters from the 87th Aerial Port Squadron waited in the back of a C-17 Globemaster III to demonstrate the technology. Aerial porters are responsible for the management and movement of passengers and cargo transported through airlift. The cargo that aerial porter teams load and unload can range from large pallets of equipment, gear and food.

Chief Master Sgt. Sean Storms, 87th APS aerial port manager, and Senior Master Sgt. Brian Anders, 87th APS assistant aerial port manager, donned the technology, which consisted of actuated leg braces and a backpack, and moved a pallet that weighed about 3,500 pounds. The two porters equipped with the Forge System moved the pallet on their own, a weight typically moved by four or five people.

*“I can definitely tell a difference; there’s a lot less pressure on my knees and I can feel the assist this system gives,” Storms said.*

Following the demo, participants were invited to try out the exoskeleton. Some climbed a set of stairs while carrying weights. Others tested it by pushing a weighted sled. Regardless of the test, participants could hear the exoskeleton’s air bladder actuators engaging as they moved.

John Florio, CRI deputy director, explained that this technology could be a game changer for the aerial port community.

“If this is optimized for the aerial porters’ particular missions, it is going to mean that teams will be able to load heavier objects on aircraft much faster using less people, which equates to saving the government and taxpayer money,” he said. “But the biggest game changer for the Air and Space Forces is less injuries to personnel, which can lead to longer careers.”

Florio explained the weight the aerial porters are required to move during missions, sometimes in austere environments or under fire, is unlike what some may experience when moving to a new home or office.

“If you’ve ever loaded anything in an office or maybe at home like a refrigerator — anything like that is small compared to what our aerial porters are loading,” Florio said. “For them, we’re talking about large pieces of cargo going into a large aircraft. So knees are under stress; ankles are under stress; backs are under stress; muscles all over the body are under stress. I’ve talked to a lot of the people here in the maintenance squadron, and chronic injuries are rampant all over this particular career field and in other related fields too.”

The related fields Florio mentioned were on the mind of Brig. Gen. John Andrus, 711th Human Performance Wing commander, who also attended the demonstration.

*“I can see additional uses for this pneumatically-powered exoskeleton, primarily in aeromedical evacuation missions where our medical personnel are lifting large litters of sick and injured warfighters into the back of aircraft,” Andrus said. “We have to think about the safety of our medical personnel, but also the safety of those we are treating and evacuating out of harm’s way.”*

Participants asked about other potential career fields that might benefit from the assisted technology. Tim Swift, ROAM Robotics CEO, stated the system could be adapted to fit other missions, but for now, attention was on providing relief to the aerial porter community, which he said sees an estimated \$31 million in annual disability benefits and suffers from lost workday injuries.

*“The opportunity to have something like this exoskeleton, that provides a capability that augments the aerial porter’s strength, that takes pressure off joints, that makes their muscles work more efficiently, and in the long run, that prevents overuse injuries – well, it’s going to be a game changer,” Florio said.*

*(Giardina is assigned to the Air Force Research Laboratory public affairs office.)*



Second Lt. Ian Casciola, 711th Human Performance Wing special warfare electrical engineer, performs a squat while wearing a pneumatically-powered exoskeleton system during an Air Force Research Laboratory demonstration at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Opposite page: Chief Master Sgt. Sean Storms, 445th Airlift Wing aerial port manager, pushes oversized cargo across the floor of a C-17 Globemaster III. (Patrick O’Reilly)



# BARKSDALE AIRMAN'S INVENTION SAVES BACKS, FINGERS, MONEY AND TIME

— By Senior Master Sgt. Ted Daigle

In 2020, Senior Master Sgt. John Donelson was very worried.

The 307th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron avionics flight superintendent had been watching Airmen struggle to load cumbersome pylons to the wing of a B-52 Stratofortress at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. They were using two large maintenance stands, their backs and any other body part necessary to get the piece in place.

The pylons serve as attachment points for various munitions and the LITENING Advanced Targeting Pod, a vital long-range targeting and surveillance system used extensively on the B-52.

“We load about three pylons per month, but their center of gravity makes them difficult to manage,” said Donelson. “There was a real chance of dropping the pylon, which can be a pretty expensive thing to replace.”

Donelson also worried about the Airman smashing fingers and hurting their backs during the loading process.

He knew there had to be a better way.

So he called on Master Sgt. John Slaughter, the 307th Maintenance Group quality assurance chief inspector, to create something to make the work safer and more efficient.

“Master Sgt. Slaughter is one of those people who can figure out anything,” said Donelson. “He has created some brilliant things in the past for us, so he was my natural go-to person.”

Slaughter's first inclination was to eliminate the use of maintenance stands. Instead, he opted to create a modification that could be used on a Munitions Handling Unit-83 aerial lift truck.

The MHU 83 is used to lift heavy munitions on the B-52 safely and efficiently, but at the time, it had no handling system to hold pylons.

Slaughter used his background as a tool and die maker to conceptualize and design the Pylon Loading Fixture (PLF), the name he gave to the MHU-83 modification.

“The challenge I took on was to design it for ease of manufacturing and to reduce costs,” said Slaughter. “I wanted it to be something that the Air Force as a whole could build.”

That mindset allowed Slaughter to simplify the design so parts could be cut in-house, using machinery in the 307th Bomb Wing's metals technology shop.

Slaughter's first design was field tested in August 2021, approximately four months after Donelson reached out to him.

Since then, the PLF has continually been refined and re-tested to ensure the most efficient and safe model possible.

“We are in a pretty good place right now, and I can't predict if it will need any more improvements, but if I see something that irks me, I'll get it fixed,” said Slaughter.

He said the current model can easily be removed from one MHU-83 to another, reducing costs even further by eliminating the need for multiple units within a shop.

For Donelson, Slaughter's efforts go well beyond cost savings.

“Most importantly, our personnel are safer because there's no risk of a pylon falling,” he said. “Also, we can do the same job with three people instead of four,” said Donelson.

With the current model in place, Slaughter has created a package other units can use to design, build and train on the PLF. That has garnered attention outside the 307th Bomb Wing.

Slaughter said he has been in conversations with an active-duty unit and Air Force Global Strike Command officials about getting access to the PLF design and training package.

In addition to the interest at Barksdale, Donelson has fielded inquiries from other units at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, and units at other bases that need to place pylons on high-wing aircraft.

“There are some C-130 units in the same boat we were in, and they've expressed a lot of interest in the modification,” he said.

And even though designing new equipment falls outside Slaughter's QA job description, he couldn't be happier that Donelson reached out to him.

“I just enjoy helping out and being productive,” said Slaughter. “There's almost no moment in the day when I'm not thinking or working on some type of project.”

That attitude has not only eased the minds of Airmen like Donelson but saved time, money, backs and fingers along the way.

CA

*(Daigle is assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing public affairs office.)*



U.S. Airmen assigned to the 307th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron attach a pylon to a B-52 Stratofortress using the Pylon Loading Fixture at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. The PLF was invented by Master Sgt. John Slaughter, 307th Maintenance Group quality assurance chief inspector, shown in middle photo.





# A TIGHT FIT

## RESCUE SQUADRON LOADMASTERS TRAIN WITH UNCOMMON CARGO

— By Master Sgt. Kelly Goonan

Ensuring they are prepared for any curve ball that might be thrown at them, loadmasters assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing’s 39th Rescue Squadron spent a week practicing specialized cargo loading at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, recently.

The intense training, led by the 34th Combat Training Squadron, challenged the combat search and rescue loadmasters, based at Patrick Space Force Base, Florida, to test and reaffirm their ability to quickly calculate, load and secure various military vehicles, aircraft parts and other uncommon cargo within the HC-130J Combat King II aircraft.

“Some of the cargo we were exposed to was very uncommon and unlike most cargo we’ve seen in the past from a rescue standpoint,” said Senior Master Sgt. Dean Scalise, 39th RQS loadmaster. “For example, we loaded a Humvee with a trailer, an MQ-9 Reaper transport coffin, an HC-130J engine and prop, and a truck so large we had to de-

flate the tires to load it. Learning techniques to load larger vehicles really made the loadmasters think about new ways to accomplish the task.”

Loadmasters are responsible for performing pre- and post-flight preparations and coordinating air-to-air refueling. They also must accurately compute the weight and balance distribution for the loading, securing and offloading of cargo and passengers to ensure all loaded assets are secured for the duration of the flight.

“For aircrew, rank doesn’t exist on the airplane in the interest of safety,” said Master Sgt. Spencer Schenkelberg, 39th RQS loadmaster. “This training allowed the loadmasters to make decisions in the interest of the mission and have the confidence to override someone of higher rank. If the restraint is wrong and comes loose, it could be catastrophic.”

While the demands of a loadmaster’s job require continuous training loading and offloading various types of

cargo and equipment, combat search and rescue loadmasters aboard the HC-130J aren’t frequently exposed to larger-scale and less-common types of military equipment and personnel.

The HC-130J Combat King II, an extended-range combat search and rescue variation of the C-130 is structured differently than the C-130 Hercules. While the aircraft platform looks almost the same on the outside, the interior of each variation is different, Schenkelberg explained.

“Where we had clearances for cargo that were incredibly tight, a Slick (C-130 Hercules) sometimes does not because of where equipment is installed,” he said. “In some instances, we were clearing the cargo door by less than an inch. When you’re loading the smallest of cargo transport-type aircraft and your cargo is clearing within an inch, it takes special experience and skill to do it quickly and efficiently.”

The training session paid quick dividends for the 39th RQS loadmasters when they had to evacuate all of the wing’s aircraft in anticipation of Hurricane Ian a week after returning from Little Rock. The loadmasters success-

fully loaded and transported something they’d not yet done on the HC-130J: a tug – an all-wheel-drive powertrain vehicle used by maintenance workers to manually tow aircraft.

The Little Rock training not only refreshed less-frequently-used skills and knowledge, but also re-instilled the need for the loadmasters to be innovative in order to find the best solution when met with a unique request to transport various pieces of cargo and equipment.

“This training is vital to anyone going down range, even if they are assigned to a dedicated cargo mission,” Schenkelberg said. “For the most part, our mission isn’t a cargo-hauling mission. For us to be forced to think outside of the box and get creative with solutions was invaluable. I feel confident now that if someone is down range and a similar scenario is presented to them, that individual will think back to this training and potentially see a more efficient solution.”



*(Goonan is assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing public affairs office.)*



Reserve loadmasters assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing’s 39th Rescue Squadron load a Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment system into the back of an HC-130J Combat King II at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas. Opposite page: Reservists load a tactical vehicle into the Combat King II. (Master Sgt. Kelly Goonan)



# A FAMILY AFFAIR: FATHER, SON SERVING TOGETHER AT KEESLER

— Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Kristen Pittman

It's common for a son or daughter to follow their father or mother into military service, but rarely do they get to serve at the same time in the same unit.

The father-son duo of Staff Sgts. Dexter and Dylan Callais get to do just that.

Dexter, the elder Staff Sgt. Callais, began his Air Force career more than 30 years ago when he enlisted in the Air Force. After a few permanent changes of station, a deployment to Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm as a munitions systems specialist and the birth of his two children, Dexter sought opportunity in the private sector.

"I originally enlisted right out of high school because I needed something to do," he said. "I started out in munitions for the first five years then moved into the computer squadron for the next five. From there I got out for an (information technology) job in the civilian world and I've been with that company for the past 23 years."

While Dexter was deep into his civilian career, Dylan was trying to figure out his own career path, first starting

a radiology program before realizing he "didn't like medical" and switching gears toward communications and public relations.

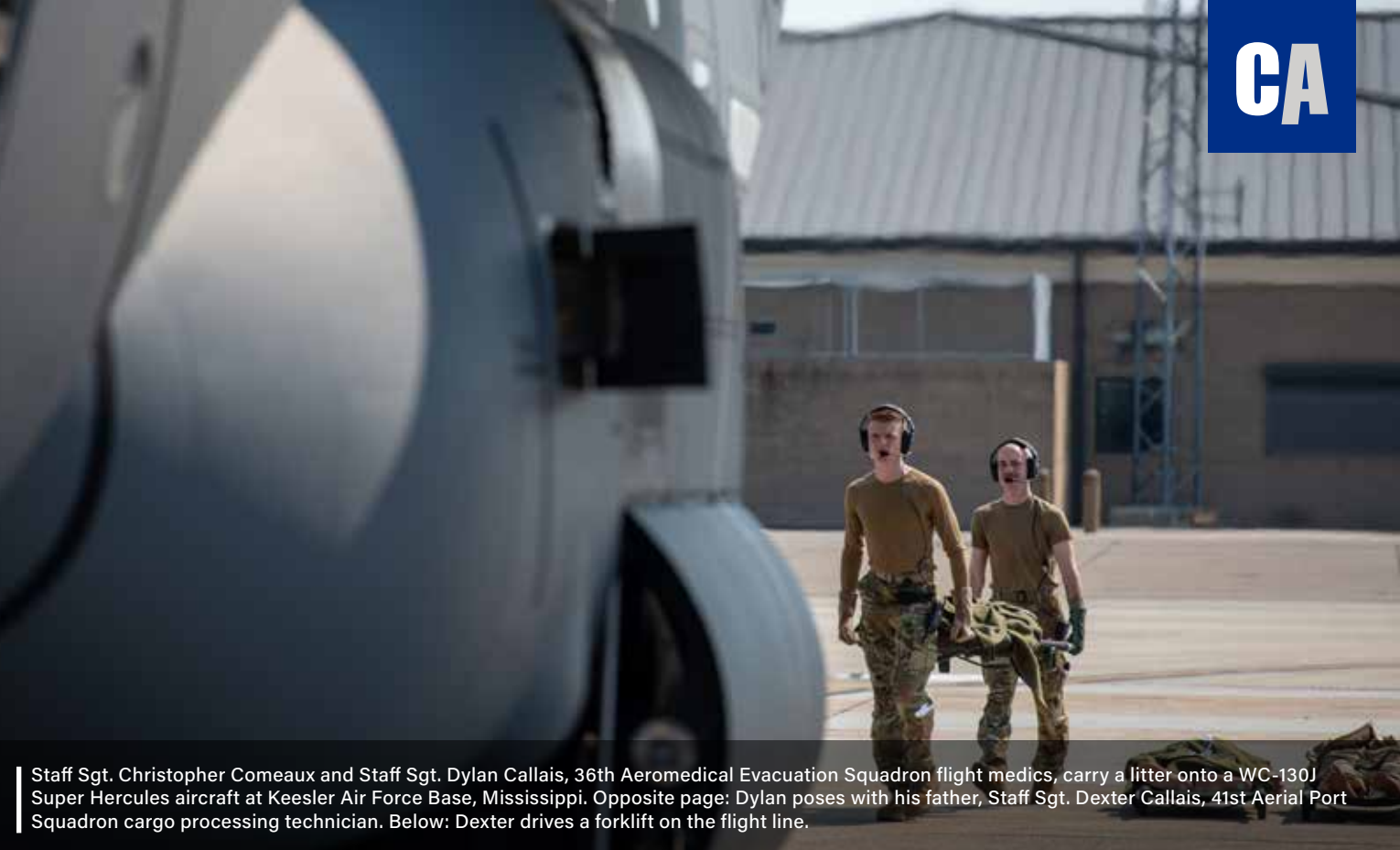
Still not feeling like he knew what he wanted to do, he considered the Air Force.

"There was a draw to serving that stemmed from my dad's service because I had heard about all of the travel he got to do," said the younger Callais. "Also, seeing the connections he had made and how they stayed connected over time was really cool."

Dylan reached out to an Air Force Reserve recruiter who asked him, "Do you want to fly?"

Following in his father's footsteps, Dylan said sure, and landed a spot as a flight medic with the 36th Aero-medical Evacuation Squadron at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

"I realized I didn't necessarily like learning in a school environment, but I did enjoy taking the knowledge and applying it, and that motivated me to embrace the learn-



Staff Sgt. Christopher Comeaux and Staff Sgt. Dylan Callais, 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron flight medics, carry a litter onto a WC-130J Super Hercules aircraft at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. Opposite page: Dylan poses with his father, Staff Sgt. Dexter Callais, 41st Aerial Port Squadron cargo processing technician. Below: Dexter drives a forklift on the flight line.

ing part," he said. "Being able to apply skills I've learned has allowed the medical field to grow on me."

Dylan graduated from Basic Military Training in 2018, and, on the way back from watching his son receive his Airman's coin, Dexter followed in his son's footsteps stopping at the same recruiter's office in New Orleans and joining the Air Force Reserve.

"We had actually seen a flyer on Air Force Reserve Recruiting's social media about prior-service reenlistments," said Dexter. "I did the math and realized I could join and figured why not do the 10 years I need to retire, so here I am."

This time around, Dexter would serve in the cargo processing section of the 41st Aerial Port Squadron, where he works with other members to receive, check-in and properly store cargo.

The 36th AES and 41st APS both fall under the 403rd Wing, a Reserve tenant unit at Keesler. While their jobs are very different, the two say they do cross paths from time to time on the flight line.

*"I usually yell at him to get to work," Dexter said, laughing.*

Both serve as traditional Reservists. Dexter is still working at the same company he started with after he separated from active duty, while Dylan, when not on active duty occupational support orders, puts the emergency medical technician certification he received from his Air Force technical training to use by working as an EMT for an ambulance service.

As for the future, the elder looks forward to retirement while the younger Callais said he is considering commissioning as a Medical Service Corps officer once he receives the bachelor's degree he is currently pursuing. But hasn't ruled out staying enlisted in order to continue flying. **CA**

*(Pittman is assigned to the 403rd Wing public affairs office.)*



# FROM POLAND TO THE FREEDOM WING: CHAPLAIN FINDS HIS HOME

— By Master Sgt. Monica Ricci

Although he grew up half a world away in Poland, Chaplain (Capt.) Michal Falgowski feels right at home serving in the 514th Air Mobility Wing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

The Catholic priest decided to leave his home country and come to the United States in 2009 to fill a need, even though he didn't speak any English.

"There was a huge need for Catholic priests in the United States, so I decided to take the risk," he said. "I never learned the English language, so that was never my goal. My second language was always German."

Despite the challenges of navigating a new country and learning a new language, Falgowski earned his ordination into the priesthood in 2013. Soon after, he met an Air Force chaplain who inspired him to join the service. Joining the military presented its own set of challenges, since he didn't have his green card at the time he tried to join.

"Finally, someone opened the door for me," the chaplain said. "My friends at home never expected it. I was trying

to avoid the military draft in Poland because it was never my thing. So the fear ended up becoming the biggest excitement of my life."

Joining the Air Force expedited his path to citizenship.

"Becoming a citizen was the biggest accomplishment I could make," he said. "When I joined the Air Force and raised my right hand, I said I would support and defend the Constitution. Now I can say 'It's my Constitution. It's my country as well.'"

Falgowski initially served as a Reserve chaplain at the 914th Air Refueling Wing, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York, while fulfilling his duties as a priest at Saint Virgil Catholic Church in Morris Plains, New Jersey. While serving at Niagara, he completed a tour of duty with the 621st Contingency Response Wing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. When the opportunity to transfer to the Freedom Wing arose, he jumped at the chance.

The chaplain offered these words of encouragement for anyone going through a tough time: "Look out the window. Even if you don't see the sun out right now doesn't mean it's not shining. Sometimes there are clouds up there. We just have to be patient and persistent. Just keep moving forward and don't give up."

(Ricci is assigned to the 514th Air Mobility wing public affairs office.)

Chaplain (Capt.) Michal Falgowski poses with his certificate of citizenship. Originally from Poland, he became a citizen of the United States after joining the Air Force. He is the 514th Air Mobility Wing's newest chaplain. (Courtesy photo)

# FLORIDA DEFENDER CA IS A **PRIME EXAMPLE** OF A MULTIFUNCTIONAL AIRMAN

— By Senior Airman Dylan Gentile

There's a lot of talk around the Air Force these days about multifunctional or multicapable Airmen — service members who bring more than just one skill to the fight and who are invaluable during deployments because they can perform tasks outside of their usual specialty.

By its very nature, the Air Force Reserve is full of multifunctional Airmen because of the civilian-learned skills Reserve Citizen Airmen bring to their military jobs.

Staff Sgt. Arin Brown, a defender with the 919th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron at Duke Field, Florida, is a prime example of a Reserve multifunctional Airman, bringing knowledge from her role as a medical professional to the 919th SOSFS mission.

*"I think my medical skills will make me very useful in a downrange environment," Brown said. "For example, I can more easily identify what is happening with someone who may be in shock, delirious, or suffering from hypothermia or heat stroke."*

Brown works as a nurse for two hospitals in the Florida panhandle. Her active-duty experience as a defender drove her to the nursing profession. As a first responder, she has been the first to the scene of a medical incident on many occasions. Her dedication to learn how patients were cared for provided the basic first aid knowledge necessary to make sure they were secured by paramedics.

"Brown is able to share those skills she has learned with us with others," said Tech. Sgt. Gerard Bhagwatsingh, second in charge of the 919th SOSFS's Bravo Flight. "She provides us invaluable perspective and information during our regular tactical combat casualty care training sessions."

Brown isn't the only defender from her squadron working in the medical profession. Many Reservists who serve as defenders often work as first responders as civilians. She said her two careers complement each other very well.

"Many of the certifications and training I've completed in my role as a defender transfer to my job as a nurse and vice versa," she said. "I've built skills outside of my specialty code that could come in handy later. Being a Citizen Air Commando has helped me to excel in high-stress and rapidly changing environments. Transferring these skills across my military and civilian careers makes both of my jobs easier."

"Her skills as a defender could also be applied to her civilian role," Bhagwatsingh said. "If there is a security incident within the hospital, she's trained to handle it." CA

(Gentile is assigned to the 919th Special Operations Wing public affairs office.)



Staff Sgt. Arin Brown, 919th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron defender, works as a nurse for two area hospitals as a civilian. (Senior Airman Dylan Gentile)



**PARTING SHOT:** Airman 1st Class Alli Brown, a member of the 914th Air Refueling Wing's 30th Aerial Port Squadron, directs Senior Airman Kodjo Fiawoo in a 10K forklift while conducting proficiency and certification training at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York. (Airman Kylar Vermeulen)



## CITIZEN AIRMAN

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