

The

Skibird



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Fall / Winter 2017



Assuming Command

The Skibird

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**COVER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION
BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. WILLIAM GIZARA**



Senior Airman Sarah Anderson of the 109th Maintenance Group was the recipient of the 109th Airlift Wing's CCM Guardian Award. This award is presented to an Airman annually who has demonstrated outstanding volunteerism and relentless pursuit of professional development and growth. As part of the award, Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson sponsors the recipient as a guardian for the Leatherstocking Honor Flight.

Leatherstocking Honor Flight, a hub of the national Honor Flight Network, is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to taking Veterans, at no cost, to Washington, D.C. Guardians play a significant role on every trip, ensuring that every Veteran has a safe and memorable experience. Duties include, but are not limited to, physically assisting the veterans at the airport, during the flight and at the Memorials. Airman Anderson served as a guardian for Korean War Veteran Jack Peter on Sept. 30.

Summary Court Officer for A1C Logan P. Wieland

It is with deep regret that we announce the untimely passing of Airman First Class Logan P. Wieland of the 109th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Stratton Air National Guard Base, Scotia, New York.

Lt Col Ty Randall, 109th Maintenance Group, has been appointed the summary court officer.

All claims for or against the estate of the deceased must be submitted to the summary court officer. For more information, call Lt Col Ty Randall at DSN 344-2514 or cell (518) 275-8020.

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FIND US ON FACEBOOK “109th Airlift Wing”



The work of the 109th Medical Group cannot be underscored enough. After 32 years of multiple deployments for aeromedical evacuation (AE) and Surgeon General (SG) flight nurse opportunities, I left the 139th AES, hung my flight suit up and assumed command of the 109th Medical Group in February 2016. It was deployment opportunities to AFCENT SG/CENTCOM where I learned the importance and critical role of a medical group. As the 109th AW has been part of my family, it was a natural decision to apply for the MDG Commander position and to “pay forward” the knowledge and experience gained ... A decision I’ve never regretted.

To assist with understanding the depth and breadth of the medical group, it is important to share examples of the incredible work by such a skillfully diverse, dedicated team. The MDG’s main purpose is to support the Wing, ANG and AF mission through proactive establishment and maintenance of a preventative health program, while working to minimize effects on unit/wing effectiveness, readiness and keeping the 109th AW fit for duty.

In addition to the traditional mission, you may be unaware other support 109th MDG provides:

- trained critical care team members
- trained patient staging personnel
- Greenland medical support
- Kool School
- non-traditional NYS CERF-P medical support
- Hurricane ground medical support
- deployments/CENTCOM/ODF/Greenland & others!
- CAT activated exercise/responses
- Wing SABC program management
- AED base program owner
- Drug Demand Program support

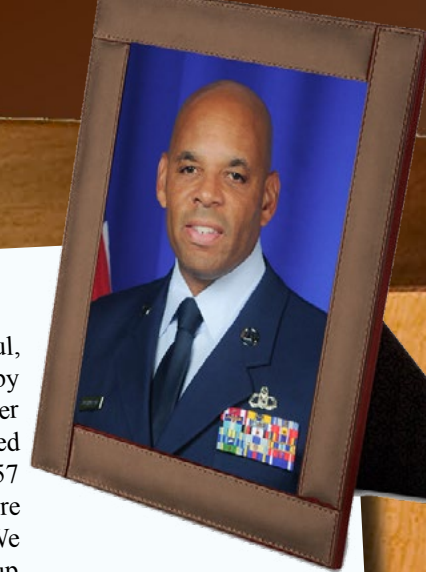
Additional, significant 2017 highlights include:

Operation Healthy Delta. Senior Master Sgt. Graham, Public Health NCOIC, was diligent in coordinating the details and participation of ten 109th AW members for support to an Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OSD/RA) sponsored, Air National Guard led, multi-service/component training event coordinated with Delta Regional Authority and Delta Area Economic Opportunity Corporation (DAEOC). OHD 2017 was a 14-day mission designed to improve readiness capabilities of military units while augmenting the healthcare needs (offering no-cost healthcare) of communities in southeastern Missouri. In September, 109th members flew to Southeastern Missouri to support the Operation Healthy Delta (OHD)-Innovative Readiness Training (IRT).

The OHD mission targeted the exercise of asset movements and operations with a vision of strengthened civil-military relations through strengthening community health and cohesiveness. Sergeant Graham stated, “The healthcare needs of the community provided an opportunity for meeting readiness training needs through execution of operations in a live environment with tangible and measurable outcomes.” (See Page 22 for story)

Metrics are as follows: Patient Population: 4,546; 1,787 Medical patients (wellness visits); 1,524 Dental patients; (dental exams, denture adjustments, fillings, and extractions); 1,235 Optometry patients (comprehensive eye exams, refractions, eyeglasses, referrals);

.... (Continued on page 6)



Greetings fellow Airmen! FY 2017 has been another successful, memorable and high ops tempo year for the 109th; highlighted by Operation Deep Freeze, Greenland and RCP 05 deployments. Other highlights include the strides made in professional development; we graduated 23 members from in-residence Professional Military Education (PME), 57 Airmen received their Community College of the Air Force degrees and more than 75 members participated in several professional development events. We also recognized Senior Airman Sarah Anderson from the Maintenance Group as the first recipient of the 109th Command Chief Guardian Award. Airman Anderson had the honor of traveling with a Korean War Veteran onboard Leatherstocking Honor Flight for a day of reflection in Washington, D.C. Additionally, we had two Airmen win New York State Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2016; Master Sgt. Lynette Tangredi from Security Forces won the First Sergeant Category and Senior Airman Jason Malm from the Medical Group won Airman Category. I continue to be impressed with all you are able to accomplish with limited resources and time.

Wing leadership fully understands that support is required to keep this positive momentum moving forward. We recognize where assistance is needed and will work with NGB, JFHQ-NY and Group Commanders to manage shortfalls and accept risks when required. The health and safety of the force is my number one concern and I will focus FY 2018 on ensuring requirements are met to pave the way for another successful year.

The 109th Command Chief priorities for FY 2018 were developed focusing on AFI 36-2618 standards of mission effectiveness, professional development, military readiness, training and unit morale. The construct of the Air Force Inspection System four major areas, Executing The Mission, Leading People, Managing Resources and Improving The Unit, will further explain these expectations.

Executing the Mission: Executing the Mission means being ready to fight America’s wars and deploy in a moment’s notice. Members of our wing are entrusted with the duty, responsibility, and accountability to ensure they remain in good standards. Our force must remain healthy physically, mentally, financially and spiritually to enhance mission effectiveness. We all have the responsibility to defend our homeland, fight wars abroad and execute our primary mission in Antarctica and Greenland. Our talent and standards must remain at a high level, built on a solid foundation of consistent behaviors. To meet current and future missions we must be a viable and competent Total Force Component capable of world-wide deployments far, abroad and near.

Leading People: Leading People is a critical element in successful mission execution. Our members are the cornerstone of our operation and must be mentored, developed and treated with respect and dignity. We must exhaust all opportunities to ensure our members are developed and shaped to become 21st Century Airmen. Leadership at all levels must clearly communicate expectations, and hold themselves and members accountable through fair and consistent enforcement. An environment built on professionalism and respect is the standard and nothing less will be tolerated. We are only as successful as the people we lead; mission first but people always!

Managing Resources: With the fiscal constraints we continue to face, we must be responsible stewards in managing resources. The management of resources wing-wide is critical to leading people, executing the mission and improving the unit. The correct placement of manpower to correct shortfalls must be identified and have a corrective action plan implemented. The misuse of manpower and funding may lead to increased stress levels and lower unit morale.

.... (Continued on page 6)

..... (Continued from page 4)

Total Glasses Prescribed/Manufactured: 1,372; Total Procedures Performed: 15,892; Overall worth of care given: \$1,411,208; Total Training Hours: 10,196 hours

Bioenvironmental symposium. In August 2017, 109 MDG/SGPB hosted a symposium for ANG Bioenvironmental (BE) personnel throughout the northeastern states (12 total). Inclusive of 109 AW BE personnel, five BE units participated and several members of local wing staff were also in attendance.

109th MDG Bioenvironmental Engineers, Lt. Col. Benson Louie and Maj. Andrew McUmbler organized the symposium to include strategic emergency response topics. The schedule consisted of multi-agency briefings, demonstrations and tours. The presenters included the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH), US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Department of Energy (DOE), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), 2nd Civil Support Team (CST), and National Park Service (NPS). The successful intent and goal met by the symposium was two-fold: build BE knowledge of emergency response assets at local, state, and Federal levels, and create networking opportunities for BE personnel. (See Page 30 for story)

MED BEACH 2017 represented a joint exercise testing multiple facets of the Enroute Care System. The joint force exercise enhanced the interoperability of medical assets from the USAF and USA; including the simulated on/off-loading of patients onto Black Hawk helicopters. Specifically, the exercise focused on patient movement from the point of injury until definitive care for contingency operations. Twelve members of the 109th MDG participated in critical care team and En Route Patient Staging System roles gaining expertise and experience in the En Route Care sustainment training. Members of the 109th MDG received accolades saving the USAF \$1,128,000 training dollars through their instruction of various areas. "Great realistic training and networking opportunities" were echoed by 109th MDG members, Lt. Col. Sharon Westbrook and Master Sgt. Elizabeth Mahan.



In summary, 2017 was an extremely busy year for the MDG. We welcomed new full-time/part-time members, moved from the CE building back to Building 1, received new equipment, provided mass physicals to the Wing, out-processed/in-processed RCP 5 deployers, Greenland, ODF, IRT, domestic operations (DOMOPs) exercise to just name a few areas. We're grateful for our move to the newly redesigned space, and we are committed to support the 109th AW and the ANG with pride, as we remain dedicated to the medical mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice Zautner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

JANICE ZAUTNER, Col., NYANG
109th MDG Commander

..... (Continued from page 5)

My direction is clear when it comes to resources; we will meet the challenge of fiscal constraints by ensuring resources are properly distributed and not over utilized wing-wide. We will take advantage of recycling programs and ensure our wing remains environmentally friendly. Managing resources is a top priority and I expect all members to do their part ensuring we are postured correctly to meet 21st Century demands.

Improving the Unit: My final priority involves Improving the Unit. We are never satisfied with the status quo and I empower all members to continue innovative thinking to enhance quality of life. Continuous improvement can help increase morale and efficiencies around the wing. With diversity comes creativity and both play a vital role in formulating new ideas for unit improvement. As we embark into the 21st Century, we must ensure that our unit continues to evolve during the changing world of technology and resources. Together, we can foster change with a continuous focus on improving the unit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denny L. Richardson". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

DENNY L. RICHARDSON, CMSgt, NYANG
109th AW Command Chief

CHANGE OF COMMAND



STORY |
Staff Sgt.
Stephanie Lambert

PHOTOGRAPHY |
Senior Master Sgt.
William Gizara

Col. Michele Kilgore became the first female to assume command of the 109th Airlift Wing during a change of command ceremony here Oct. 15.

Kilgore, a command pilot with more than 3,500 flight hours and seven deployments under her belt, becomes the 14th commander of the 109th AW. She assumed command from Col. Shawn A. Clouthier who served as the wing commander since 2012.

In a time honored traditional change of command ceremony representing the transfer of responsibility from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander, Kilgore respectfully accepted the guidon of the wing from Maj. Gen. Anthony German, the Adjutant General of New York and Commander of the New York Air National Guard.

“Ability and capability is not a gender thing,” said Clouthier. “She will bring a whole new perspective, it will be great for our history as a wing.”

Kilgore is the third generation of military in her family with both her father and grandfather having received a Purple Heart while serving.

“Flying is in my blood, and I am excited to bring my vast expertise to this wing; it’s not about me, it’s about the mission,” said Kilgore.

Kilgore said it is an honor to be selected to follow in Clouthier’s footsteps.

“It’s a privilege to follow in (Colonel Clouthier’s) footsteps and his legacy of over 35 years here. Thank you for the tutelage over these last few weeks, and I am indebted for the education so that I can hit the ground running,” Kilgore said to Clouthier during the ceremony.

The ceremony was well attended by 109th Airmen, family members including her husband Col. Robert Kilgore, 107th Airlift Wing commander, and several military leaders from across New York at both the wing and state level.

“Whether it’s the Arctic or Antarctic, domestically or globally, service to this nation is a calling; it is the noblest of professions and you have my commitment to protect the mission from pole to pole, preserve the legacy, and honor the heritage of our wing that is nearly 70 years old,” Kilgore said to the Airmen of the wing.

The 109th Airlift Wing joined other wings across New York to support hurricane relief missions in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The 109th flew troops and equipment to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The wing had 35 aircrew on duty flying 37 sorties. Totalling 110 flying hours, in support of FEMA and Department of Defense domestic operations missions. The 109th moved 208 personnel and 122 tons of cargo flying those missions.

Eight Airmen with the 109th Airlift Wing's Air Transportation Office were deployed to Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, providing ATO support for Hurricane Maria...

Answering the call

By the 109th Air Transportation Office Aguadilla Team

We all watched the news as the hurricanes came in, one after the other. We could see the images and listen to the arguments over the politics of it all. But the most important thing was that American citizens were suffering in a devastated region, and the call went out for aid. We answered and flew off into the unknown.

Puerto Rico is known as a vacation destination, and rightfully so. The island offers beautiful beaches and a rugged yet scenic geography. The locals are friendly and upbeat, even in the face of adversity. Here in Aguadilla, there are many signs of the passing of the storm, but generally life seems upbeat. In other places, however, life hangs in the balance.

When we stepped off the C-17, we all shared the same sense of disconnect that a new location brings. We walked to the small series of tents that served as command and control and were given our welcome brief.

Far down the airfield, Marine Ospreys awaited their uploads of food and water pallets. A customs and border patrol Blackhawk flew in and out at random intervals, delivering the same goods as the Marine aircraft. Tractor trailers drove by at a constant pace, laden with relief. Forklifts added to the dance, creating a scene of controlled chaos. There was the smell of a new place, and also the smell and roar of countless generators. Across the field, FEMA workers started to build up the tent city that would house all who would work there. That first day was a lot to take in.

As we secured our quarters and mingled in with the 821st Contingency Response Group that preceded us, things became smoother and the parts of the process easier to understand. We left any and all politics behind and focused on the day to day tasks. Every morning, an Army convoy of trucks and Humvees, escorted by The Puerto Rican police, would make its way into the local towns and countryside to deliver the needed supplies to the suffering populace.

We rotated our members in with the convoy and provided assistance. This was the real, hands-on, see and feel the tragedy part of the mission. Breath taking views of the land combined with haunting images of displaced families and ravaged villages. The people were grateful, but our time here ended well before their trial ceased.

The rotor portion of the mission provided yet another view. Oftentimes the crews of the Blackhawks and Ospreys would need assistance handing out relief. One or two of our members would fly with the aircraft to whichever location needed help at the moment. From above, the power of the hurricane was obvious. Countless roofs simply did not exist anymore. Trees had been stripped or uprooted. Many developed areas had the appearance of a war zone. It was all very surreal, and also humbling to be the angel in the sky bringing help. One has to do it to know the feeling and it is a sad truth that some feelings can only be had this way.

As the weeks passed, we were able to venture out into the local areas and mingle more with the population. We learned a great deal about the history of the island and in many cases we would just stop and stare at the sheer beauty of the place. Not one of us will ever forget this experience, or the faces of those villagers in the mountains who hugged us and didn't want to let go. This place is in our hearts now, and if tragedy falls again, we will answer the call. It's what we do.

**Editor's Note: The eight Airmen who deployed to Aguadilla from the 109th ATO were: Master Sgts. Kelly Littlejohn and Matthew Pierce; Staff Sgts. Michael Byerwalters Jr., Brittany Foster, Timothy Mallory and John Cox; Senior Airman Joseph Hart; and Airman 1st Class Ryan Foster.*



Courtesy Photo

Airman deploys for hurricane support, returns with new friend

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY |
Staff Sgt. Stephanie Lambert



When Staff Sgt. John Cox, an air transportation specialist assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, deployed to Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, Oct. 9, he assumed he would be helping the local people recover from Hurricane Maria; he did not expect to bring home a four-legged addition to his family.

Cox said he had just come off a six-month deployment in Kuwait when he volunteered to go to Puerto Rico where he worked with heavy machinery loading and unloading cargo from aircraft.

"We were placed close to the airport in tents in an open field so we could hear the aircraft when they landed," said Cox.

"Our main job was assisting Department of Defense personnel unload water and Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), from aircraft and load them onto vehicles and small aircraft for distribution to the people hit hard by the hurricane," said Cox.

While Cox was performing a security check of the area, he came across an abandoned building; once inside he said he discovered a scared, emaciated, light-brown dog.

"I brought the dog some beef jerky from an MRE and some water every day, and pretty soon she started following me back to my tent and waiting outside," said Cox.

When the dog started following Cox to work every day he worried he would get into trouble and decided he should talk to the officer in charge.

Once he introduced her to leadership he was given a thumbs-up to having her by his side.

"That's when I realized I couldn't leave this dog in Puerto Rico when my deployment ended," said Cox.

"I drove over an hour to a veterinary clinic and had the dog completely checked and vaccinated, which was a condition I was given to keep her with me," he said.

Cox said the next hurdle was to find a way to get the dog he named Maria home, which would prove to be no easy feat because he couldn't just put her on the aircraft without authorization.

"I researched all the regulations I could find and felt like I hit a wall until I found a local adoption agency that specialized in rescuing pit bulls," said Cox. "They were able to get her home."

"I not only made a positive impact on the people of Puerto Rico, but I was able to save an animal," said Cox. "I saw her go from near-death to super healthy in a matter of months."

He said he is looking forward to hiking the high peaks with his new hiking buddy, once the weather is better.

"My advice to someone who plans on adopting a dog is to prepare to have your hands and your heart full," said Cox. "Having a dog is sometimes like having a child, but all the effort will be worth it when you see them waiting for you at the end of the day."



GRAINAU, Germany — Chief Master Sgt. Amy Giaquinto, senior enlisted leader, New York Air National Guard, addresses African partner senior enlisted leaders, about the State Partnership Program, Nov. 10, 2017, during the first ever U.S. Africa Command hosted, Africa Senior Enlisted Leader Conference Nov. 6-10 in Grainau, Germany. The conference brought together Senior Enlisted Leaders from more than 20 African nations and the U.S. to discuss shared challenges and opportunities. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Grady Jones)

Giaquinto first woman, first Airman to serve as New York National Guard's top statewide enlisted leader

LATHAM, N.Y. -- Command Chief Master Sgt. Amy Giaquinto, was the first woman to serve as Command Chief of the New York Air National Guard's 5,800 members when she took on that job in 2016.

Now she's got two more firsts to her name.

In October, the Ballston Spa, N.Y., resident became the first Air National Guard member -- and the first woman -- to serve as the top enlisted advisor to the Adjutant General of New York.

She's now the senior NCO dealing with issues impacting the enlisted Soldiers of the 10,300-member New York Army National Guard as well as the Airmen of the New York Air National Guard.

Since 1979, when the position originated, the job has been filled by seven Army National Guard Command Sergeants Major who were all men.

"I'm looking forward to getting out and about and learning about the Army, meeting the Soldiers, and hearing their stories," Giaquinto said.

"This is a learning curve for me. However, we have great Army Guard leaders across New York who will be ready and willing to help me," she added.

Giaquinto started off her military career wearing green; as an enlisted Soldier from 1984 to 1987 in Germany. That, though, is a lot

different than serving in a joint position at a senior level, she said.

Giaquinto replaced Command Sgt. Major David Piwowski who served in that role, while also acting as the Command Sergeant Major of the New York Army National Guard.

Piwowski will now continue to serve as Command Sergeant Major for the New York Army National Guard, while Giaquinto wears the two hats as New York National Guard senior enlisted leader and Air National Guard Command Chief.

The job switch will make Giaquinto competitive for the top enlisted positions at the national level, explained Major General Anthony German, the Adjutant General of New York, while also ensuring a first rate NCO was doing the job.

"Command Sgt. Major Piwowski has been in the position for the last two years, he did a great job, and he is now competitive at the national level to be the Command Sergeant Major of the National Guard or any other position the Army needs," German said. "So to be fair, on the Air Guard side I wanted to make sure we were competitive on the national level."

Giaquinto has the skills to go out into the field, learn what Soldiers and Airmen are concerned about, while also communicating on his behalf, German said.

"Amy is the right person at the right time," German added.

Giaquinto played a key role in putting together classes to help Guard Airmen learn what they need to know to advance their careers, German said. He's challenged her to look into doing the same thing for Army Guard Soldiers, German added.

After leaving the Army in 1987, where she served as an administrative specialist at United States Army Europe Headquarters in Heidelberg, Giaquinto had a ten year break in service.

In 1997 she joined the 109th Airlift Wing. She served in information management, administration and human resources jobs at the 109th between 1997 and 2011. She also deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

From 2011 to 2013 she served as personnel superintendent at the New York Air National Guard Headquarters in Latham.

In 2013 she was named Command Chief for the 109th AW, a position she held until 2016.

"I am pretty excited that I am the first female in this job," Giaquinto said.

"I hope it breeds awareness that just because it has never been held by a female, and it has never been held by an Air Guard member, that doesn't mean that it can't," she added.

"We have to get out of the mindset that just because that's the way it has always been doesn't mean that is the way it has to be. People should be selected for ability and potential, for diversity of thought and experience, and not judge a book by its cover," Giaquinto said.

In her role as state Command Chief for the Air National Guard, she's been visiting Air Guard units around the state "talking to Airmen and hearing their stories," Giaquinto said.

She brings what she learns -- "that they are constantly training to be mission ready, supporting domestic ops and supporting the war on terror, while still pursuing professional development" -- back to German and other Air Guard senior leaders.

"Now I'll be doing the same thing on the Army side," Giaquinto said. "I want to make sure the command sergeants major, the sergeants major and all the other NCOs, have everything they need to be able to train, mentor and develop their Soldiers."

It will be more challenging meeting Army Guard Soldiers because they are spread out in more than 40 locations around the state, while the Air Guard's personnel are centralized at five bases.

Giaquinto thinks her experiences as an Active Duty Soldier, and traditional and full-time Air Guard member will help her relate to New York's Soldiers and Airmen.

"I joined the Air National Guard as a single mom with a full-time civilian job, so I know what it is like to be in the military with young children," she said.

She's also now part of a dual military family—her husband Chief Master Sgt. Mark Giaquinto is a member of the 109th Airlift Wing—with one daughter in college, a son just starting high school, and a married daughter who belongs to the Kentucky Air National Guard.

"I think my situation helps me relate to Soldiers and Airmen and family members too," Giaquinto said.

"I've been the one deployed with the family back home and I've also been the one at home while my husband was deployed," she said.

"I think my life and work experiences help me relate to Soldiers and Airmen," she said. "I hope the Soldiers and Airmen are comfortable talking to me."



File Photo

Guardsmen guides in great outdoors

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY
Staff Sgt. Benjamin German



For many people starting a small business is a daunting prospect. For Tech. Sgt. Abraham Gadway, it's following his passion.

Gadway, a quality assurance evaluator with the 109th Maintenance Group here, started his own wilderness guiding service in April 2017, combining his love of the outdoors from a young age with his military experience.

As a QA evaluator, Gadway works directly for the maintenance group command, serving as a primary technical adviser in the maintenance organization, assisting to identify, and resolve workmanship and compliance issues impacting the mission.

In contrast to his military career, as a guide in the east-central Adirondack Mountains, Gadway provides clients with wilderness adventures including hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, canoeing and even whitewater rafting on the Indian and upper Hudson rivers.

This year Gadway began a different kind of "adventure" by starting his own wilderness guiding service. He began by teaching various American Red Cross certification courses that helped him get the funds needed to grow the guiding and outdoor custom retail service side of his business.

Gadway said the leadership and management skills he learned at the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing motivated him in his business endeavor.

For years Gadway worked as a guide for a private agency, but after branching out on his own he decided to increase his business skills by attending the "Boots to Business" entrepreneurial education course here.

"(Boots to Business) gave me a new perspective ... and several great ideas as well to help grow and expand the business" said Gadway.

Gadway grew up in the Indian Lake region of the Adirondack Mountains and as a young man also served as a volunteer firefighter and first responder, working on nearly a dozen search, rescue and wilderness first aid scenarios.

For him, it was a natural progression to want to share his love for the outdoors with others, it was for this reason he decided to become a New York State licensed guide.

"My passion is being outdoors," he said.

He had this advice for fellow Airmen who aspire to accomplish personal goals: "If anybody has a desire or a goal that they want to do in life... If you are passionate about it and love it, just do it!"

Augmentee program gives Airman new perspective on ODF mission

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY |
Master Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica -- As a financial management technician with the 109th Airlift Wing, Senior Airman Kayla Casey didn't think she'd have the opportunity to see the other side of the world many Airmen at her unit frequent each and every year.

That changed when she exited the C-17 Globemaster III and took her first steps on the coldest place on Earth Oct. 24th.

Now, as an augmentee for Joint Task Force – Support Forces Antarctica (JTF-SFA) here, Casey, a West Sand Lake, N.Y. resident, has a brand-new perspective on the mission the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing from Scotia, New York, has been a part of for almost 30 years.

Having the world's only ski-equipped cargo aircraft - LC-130 "Skibirds" - the wing supports Operation Deep Freeze (ODF) which is the Department of Defense's logistical support to the National Science Foundation's U.S. Antarctic Program.

Casey works directly for JTF-SFA as a Mission Support information manager. Her duties include staff support, publishing records, administrative communication and workgroup management.

"The augmentee program gives people an opportunity to see the mission close up and understand it," said Col. Al Ross, 13th Air Expeditionary Group, JTF-SFA commander. "It helps them understand why they're doing their job at home or how the impact of their job at home benefits what we do here."

At home station in New York, Casey and the rest of the finance team work diligently on various pay issues, especially during the ODF season. Issues dealing with pay orders and travel orders from the other side of the world make more sense to Casey now.

"It's definitely helped me tremendously especially with my job at home," she said. "Now I understand what the members are going through and what issues they're having, especially when it comes to getting paid or signing orders."

Casey has also had the opportunity to see all the work it takes to keep the aircraft going in the harsh environment.

"I went out on the flightline and got to see what the members do every day, and it was incredible" she said. "It makes me so incredibly proud to be part of the 109th and the mission that we're doing here."

Not only will Casey return home with a new outlook on the overall mission, she'll also return home one rank higher than when she left for Antarctica. Casey was promoted to Senior Airman while here, Nov. 4.

She said the promotion and the entire experience here is something she'll never forget.



LC-130 crew completes South Pole mission despite extreme weather conditions

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica -- The harsh, unforgiving and unpredictable weather of Antarctica made a routine mission to the South Pole a little more than an LC-130 "Skibird" crew with the 139th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron had bargained for Nov. 9.

Despite the extreme cold, minimum visibility and maximum crosswinds, the crew safely landed at the National Science Foundation's Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station after three attempts during a resupply mission.

The squadron is part of the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing, based at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, N.Y. The wing flies the only aircraft in the U.S. military equipped with skis.

After loading and unloading cargo and passengers at the South Pole, the crew headed back to McMurdo Station on the coast.

But mid-way through the flight back, extreme weather made it unsafe to land at McMurdo with the limited fuel on the ski-equipped aircraft. This forced the crew to make an emergency weather divert to Mario Zuchelli Station.

The station, owned by Italy's National Antarctic Research Program, is located a little less than 200 miles from McMurdo at Terra Nova Bay.

The stop at Mario Zuchelli Station allowed the crew to refuel and get much needed rest before returning to McMurdo safely on Nov. 10.

According to Capt. Brandon Caldwell, the mission pilot, encountering one or two issues is normal throughout the Operation Deep Freeze season. However, encountering so many issues during one mission is quite rare.

"Throughout the years, our weather restrictions have become stricter so we can try and avoid situations like this one," he added.

"But the weather is just so unpredictable," said Senior Master Sgt. Michael Messineo, flight engineer on the mission.

The crew attributes their teamwork, quick thinking and training to the landing at the South Pole and the decision to make the emergency weather divert.

"Teamwork is crucial when landing in extreme weather," said Lt. Col. Ronald Ankabrandt, the mission navigator. "Everyone on the crew had a job while we were landing, scanning the horizon, looking for flags -- this type of mission requires everyone to help," he said.

For 1st Lt. Brian Alexander, the co-pilot, this was his first mission in Antarctica, and he treated it as a learning experience.

"I've probably learned more my first mission on the ice than most co-pilots have learned in years," he said.

The crews train to land on snow and ice with the Skibirds in Greenland every summer. Alexander said that while the training they are able to do at the camps in Greenland is invaluable for what they do, nothing can prepare you for taking that first mission on the Antarctic continent.

Not only do the crews have to maintain their composure while landing on a skiway—a runway made out of snow and ice—with minimum visibility, they also endure the extreme cold as they move cargo. During this mission, crews loaded 15,000 pounds of cargo with wind chill temperatures estimated at 65 degrees below zero.

While training in Greenland, Airman 1st Class Ryan Rhoads, a student loadmaster on the flight was briefed that the weather in Antarctica would be less forgiving. Like Alexander, this was also his first mission to the coldest, windiest, most inhospitable continent on the globe and he wondered how he would fare.

"I completely understand it now," he said. "Our unit needs to be able to overcome and adapt when things like this happen and this really makes me appreciate the mission we have."

Senior Master Sgt. David Vesper, an instructor loadmaster, added that the cold temperatures mixed with the wind chill coming off the engines makes for an extremely difficult mission. "The South Pole is the toughest place we go (because of weather) -- the whole crew has to put safety first," he said.

The Skibirds, known for their ability to land on snow and ice, provide supplies and transport fuel and people to the various research stations across the continent. Operation Deep Freeze is the logistical support provided by the Department of Defense to the U.S. Antarctic Program, which is managed by the National Science Foundation. This is the 30th season the Airmen from the 109th Airlift Wing have been part of Operation Deep Freeze.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY |
Master Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

odf



The crew (from left): 1st Lt. Brian Alexander, co-pilot; Airman 1st Class Ryan Rhoads, loadmaster; Lt. Col. Ronald Ankabrandt, navigator; Senior Master Sgt. Michael Messineo, flight engineer; Senior Master Sgt. David Vesper, loadmaster; and Capt. Brandon Caldwell, pilot.

feature

Airman writes about Antarctic adventures

"Her mighty 109th Airlift Wing provides support for Science Exploration. Flying gives her adventure and pride serving her glorious Nation. Air Force Amanda is a Navigator in the 'Skibird', the Air Force's coolest plane! Her navigation skills help fly through dangerous and challenging terrain." - Air Force Amanda: Adventure in Antarctica

STORY | Master Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

PHOTOGRAPHY | Staff Sgt. Benjamin German

Air Force Amanda – the storybook character version of Maj. Amanda Coonradt of the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing – came to life in December 2015 while Coonradt was supporting U.S. science research in Antarctica.

Her daughter, Amelia, was just 7 months old, and Coonradt wanted to explain to her why her mom was 9,500 miles away from Grafton, New York, where Amelia was.

So she decided to write a book to not only make her feel closer to her daughter back home but to also help other children of the 109th understand why the mission that took their parents to the other side of the world was so important.

"I made it a goal of mine during my quiet time while I was on the ice and missing her," Coonradt explained.

"I'd go to the library or write in my room and try to get inspired to get the ball rolling. I wrote about three-quarters of it while I was on the ice that year," she said.

Now Coonradt, a navigator for the LC-130 "Skibird" planes the 109th flies to the Antarctic, the Arctic and Greenland, is sharing the adventure of Air Force Amanda with children everywhere through "Air Force Amanda: Adventure in Antarctica."

She envisions the self-published book as the first in a series.

"Since I had Amelia, I'm always on the lookout for books about military parents or a military female parent who deploys or does exciting things," Coonradt said.

"I had a hard time finding that. I don't really see a lot of very specific mission-orientated books especially with female flyers. That's when I decided I really want to get this out there," she said. "I thought it might benefit my military brothers and sisters who do this mission year after year. And sometimes it's hard to explain to their loved ones what they're doing when they deploy."

Along with being a navigator, Coonradt holds a bachelor's degree in childhood education and a master's degree in education and literacy. Her goal when she first enlisted with the 109th in 2000 was to obtain her bachelor's degree and become a teacher.

As she got more exposure to the military, she found an interest in flying and her priorities changed; her new goal was to become a navigator. She got her commission in 2007.

In April of 2015, Coonradt and her husband, Russ, had their daughter, Amelia.

Coonradt began writing the book while she was deployed to Antarctica in December of 2015 – her first time deployed to the ice since her daughter was born.

"I knew (deploying) was going to be a huge hardship, but it was something that Russ and I talked about even before we tried for children - that this was going to be part of our lifestyle," she said.

The book discusses the history, science, animals and landscape of Antarctica from the perspective of a female LC-130 navigator.

Coonradt needed to find someone who would bring her words to life through illustration. Through online research, she was able to find Julio Rodriguez. She sent pictures of herself, the aircraft and other images to help him illustrate her story.

The next step was to get the book published.

"I wasn't sure how to be published – so I started digging deeper," she said. After a lot of online research, she discovered the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and was able to find the tools and resources needed to self-publish her book.

Coonradt self-published the book through Create Space, an Amazon company, and released it June 10. She has plans for an "Air Force Amanda" adventure series.

"I want to educate and empower! I have joined my love for education and my profession as an Air Force aviator by bringing to life 'Air Force Amanda's' adventure series," she said.

"I might go into a little bit more detail about what the navigator really does on the airplane, with plotting and mission planning and fuel planning," Coonradt said.

"I absolutely wrote this for Amelia and any future children we may have. If it's not successful, that's fine. The success for me is that I've completed this goal, and I have this for her."

"This was my first try and there were definitely some lessons learned. I'd like to do one about New Zealand, Greenland, United States – something fun, I don't really know yet," Coonradt said. "We'll see where my imagination goes and what I'm able to do."

"Thank you for flying with Air Force Amanda today. You too can find pride and adventure in your own special way! Adventure can be found through the world, anywhere. It's up to you to reach for the stars. Try it, it's a dare!" - Air Force Amanda: Adventure in Antarctica



LC-130 Skibird aircrews train for polar operations

KANGERLUSSUAQ, Greenland -- Having the world's only ski-equipped LC-130 aircraft, commonly referred to as Skibirds, the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing is able to provide the airlift needed to get to remote locations in Antarctica and Greenland in support of the National Science Foundation.

It's a mission unique to the wing and one that requires specialized training. While upstate New York, where the 109th Airlift Wing is based, is known to have some brutal winter weather, it still isn't enough to get these aircrews trained to land and take off on snow and ice.

That's where Raven Camp comes in. Located 108 miles southeast of Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, on the Greenland ice cap, the camp allows aircrews to get the specialized training required to fly in and out of some of the world's most austere locations. It's also the location of Kool School's field portion – three days to learn arctic survival skills.

With 50 training missions already completed since the Greenland season began in April, aircrews are well on their way to be ready to fly in Antarctica.

"We'll get them out to that snowfield, and we'll work on our takeoffs and landing," said Maj. Justin Garren, 139th Airlift Squadron's Greenland Operations chief. "We'll work on special procedures on the ground for the loadmasters to load and unload on the snow."

Maj. Dia Ham, a ski mission co-pilot student with the 139th Airlift Squadron, is no stranger to flying the traditional C-130 Hercules, but flying the Skibirds is something brand new to her. She transferred to the unit after about 10 years on active duty, and flew her first Skibird training mission on the ice cap July 27.

"There's a level of nervousness," she said about her first time flying to Raven Camp. "You plan for it and you hear the stories, but it was so exciting to finally see it myself with my own eyes and be in the seat."

Ham went on to say that while the procedures and steps they are taught to follow are expected, it still can't compare to landing on the snow for the first time.

"There's no way to change the steps that we follow or the procedures or the sequence of events – but you can't prepare for landing on skis," she said.

While aircrews are training on the flight deck, loadmasters are training in the back of the aircraft.

Because of the remote locations for some of the camps the wing supports, loadmasters must be able to perform combat offloads – offloading cargo while the aircraft is running with the ramp down 18 inches above the snow.

"It's very important to learn the technique and get it right," said Master Sgt. Randy Powell, a loadmaster instructor who has been training students this season.

"There's a lot you have to learn really quickly," said Airman 1st Class Taylor Richards, a student loadmaster who is currently on his second trip here this season. "The stuff that we do, they can't teach you in loadmaster school because it's only stuff that we do. There are only about 60 loadmasters in the unit, and we're the only ones in the world who do this, so there's a little bit of a learning curve."

"(Raven Camp) is where we do a lot of our practice and learning," Ham said. "Antarctica is all missions – there's no time to do multiple landings or try things out. The training here is so valuable."



Master Sgt. Randy Powell loads a training pallet onto an LC-130 aircraft at Raven Camp, Greenland, on July 28, 2017. Powell is an instructor loadmaster with the 139th Airlift Squadron.



PHOTOGRAPHY | Senior Master Sgt. William Gizara

STORY | Master Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

greenland

Airmen come together to improve LC-130 static display

STORY | Master Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

Pride. History. Tradition.

These are just a few of the words Airmen here have used to describe the significance of the LC-130 Skibird static display that sits in front of the base.

Throughout the years, the 1957 LC-130 model has lost some of its vibrancy, so about 15 Airmen throughout the Wing got together over the last three weeks cleaning, waxing, sanding and painting the aircraft that signifies the unique polar missions the 109th AW carries out each and every year.

“All around the world, everyone knows (the 109th Airlift Wing) – it’s when they get here that we should have something in front of our unit that says that we are the best,” said 1st Lt. Matthew Begin, 109th Maintenance Operations officer who facilitated the project. “It’s the first thing you see – first impressions are lasting impressions. Why not have that lasting first impression be the best one, and prove that we can live up to our reputation.”

The project began Aug. 10 and continued through Aug. 31. Airmen cleaned up the aircraft through pressure washing, waxing, buffing and sanding. The nose of the aircraft had become chipped, so sheet metal technicians sanded it down, filled it with sealant and painted it to protect it from the elements.

“The windows had been cracking and delaminating over the years – you could put your finger through some of the windows they were that soft,” Begin said. “Our sheet metal professional, Tech. Sgt. Ernie Labounty, 109th Equipment Maintenance Flight, came up with the idea of sealing the windows in, by installing a thin plastic inlay over top of the windows, and painting them black to preserve it.”

Master Sgt. Sarah Helligrass, 109th Communications Flight, heard about the need for volunteers and immediately saw it as an opportunity for her to help preserve the history of the base.

“It’s our history,” she said. “We are the premiere polar unit – we can’t just ignore that. I hope my little contribution can help toward more base-wide visibility.”

Begin said the plan is to make this an annual Wing-wide effort to keep the aircraft looking the best it can.

“Working the static is about bringing the 109th family together for a common good, recognizing the importance of first impressions and unit pride,” he said. “It’s what the 109th is all about – coming together and making the time to focus on the good stuff, preserving history, and our reputation.”



Master Sgt. Sarah Helligrass, 109th Communications Flight, paints a propeller on the LC-130 static display that sits in front of Stratton Air National Guard Base, Scotia, New York, on Aug. 23, 2017.



PHOTOGRAPHY | Senior Master Sgt. William Gizara

Airmen provide health care in Missouri

Airmen assigned to the 109th Medical Group participated in Operation Healthy Delta, an innovative readiness training exercise which provided health care services in the Bootheel Region of southeastern Missouri at no-direct cost to local residents, Sept. 13-21.

Operation Healthy Delta is an Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve sponsored, Air National Guard led, multi-service component training event. The 14-day mission was coordinated with Delta Regional Authority and Delta Area Economic Opportunity Corporation and was designed to improve readiness capabilities of military units while augmenting the healthcare needs of communities in southeastern Missouri.

Airmen and officers assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing performed a wide variety of services while participating in OHD.

"It was evident that the Bootheel region had a very real need for access to health care," said Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Graham, ANG mission non-commissioned officer in charge.

Graham said the OHD mission not only allowed military personnel to have hands-on training, but afforded the community an opportunity to receive no-cost health care they would not have had access to otherwise.

Master Sgt. Scott Bailey served as acting first sergeant for the Caruthersville site and said he did whatever was needed to ensure the mission ran smoothly.

"Most of us put on a uniform so that we can serve the country, our communities and individuals; the IRT provided an opportunity to help a community that desperately needed it through service to individuals," said Bailey. "I know the focus of the IRT was training, but for me that faded into the background the more I spoke to and heard from the people we were helping."

The amount of people who were helped and training gained through OHD was staggering. A total of 15,892 procedures were performed with an overall worth of care totaling \$1,411,208.

The care given was: 1,235 optometry visits, 1,787 wellness visits, and 1,524 dental visits. The total number of training hours was 10,196 of exceptional real-world training.

"One of the biggest things that I took from this experience was how so many people from different areas come together to help a community in need," said Senior Airman Ashley Bochenek, OHD participant.

Along with Graham, Bailey and Bochenek, other Airmen from the 109th AW who participated in OHD were: Chaplain (Capt.) Julie Taylor, Master Sgt. David Morrison, Tech. Sgt. Kevin Partlow, Staff Sgt. Chad Alaimo, Staff Sgt. Ronald Butler, Senior Airman Emily Roth and Senior Airman Ayla Bardin.



Courtesy photo



STORY | Staff Sgt. Stephanie Lambert

Senior Airman Ayla Bardin treats a young girl during Operation Healthy Delta in southeastern Missouri in September.

Courtesy photo

10-11-17
①

To whom all this may concern. My name is Michael Clement, I live in Southeast Mo, I went to the Delta Clinic in Charleston Mo to get a few bad teeth pulled, but little did I know that "all" of my teeth were in real bad shape. Infected, loose, and needed to come out, so the Doc told me that since that was the last day they would be there and if I'd let em he would pull them all. The nurse told me all the health concerns it would cause down the road, so I said go ahead and pull em. 16 teeth later and a little healing time I feel so much better knowing they were all out and I've since gotten dentures, only the bottom but that's a start. I wasn't in the chain long enuf

10-11-17
②

to get the Masked Mans Name, on which branch of the Service he served with. So what I'd like to do is tell the Masked Man THANK YOU SO MUCH, you and your team are great people, you all went above and beyond the call of duty, and saved me so much pain and problems at no cost at all it unbelievable wow. People ask me how much it all cost me and I told em it cost me a few boxes of Purcan Donuts. You all did so much for so many people that couldn't afford it any where else and didn't even ask for a cent. Thanks to you all, that was so great. And to the Masked Man that worked his magic with those pliers. You rock Bro and you're a GOD SEND. Sincerely Lucky 16
-Michael

support

Wing conference room named in honor of community leader

The new wing conference room in the 109th Airlift Wing headquarters building here is now the Chuck Steiner Memorial Conference Room following a dedication ceremony in Chuck Steiner's name Aug. 4. Steiner, Capital Region Chamber president, passed away April 18.

About 50 people including Steiner's wife, Marcy, and son, Matt; Sen. James Tedisco; Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara; Maj. Gen. Anthony German, New York Adjutant General; and Chief Master Sgt. Amy Giaquinto, New York Air National Guard command chief, attended the ceremony.

The ceremony began with the presentation of the New York State Conspicuous Service Medal, awarded to any individual who distinguishes themselves by exceptionally meritorious service in a capacity of great responsibility.

An excerpt from the citation read:

"Through dedication and leadership, and keen insight and perceptive discourse, Mr. Steiner greatly assisted in securing the future, viability and stability of the 109th Airlift Wing in Glenville, the Navy Operational Support Center in Glenville, the Niskayuna Army Reserve Center in Schenectady, the Navy Support Activity in Saratoga Springs, the Armed Forces Recruiting Center in Schenectady, and the Nuclear Power Training Unit in Ballston Spa."

German presented the citation and medal to Steiner's family.

"Chuck was as much a member of the militia as the folks who do wear the uniform, because he fought it on a different battle," German said.

"Chuck was an American patriot – he truly bled red, white and blue in everything that our country stands for," said Mark Eagan, Capital Region Chamber CEO. "When Chuck thought about those values, he quickly thought about our military, and what our military does every day to protect and preserve the freedoms that we have.

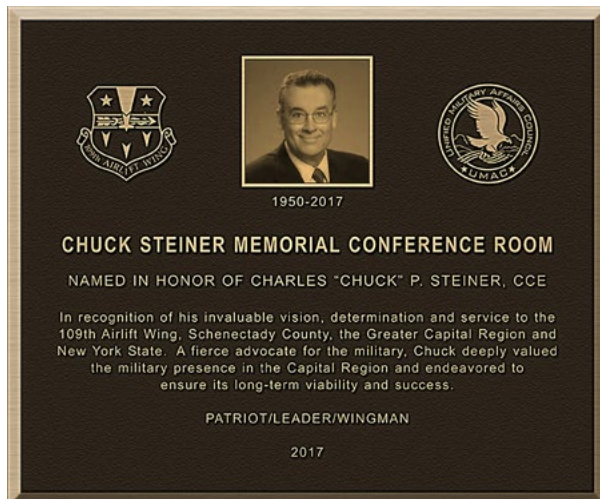
"I think this recognition today really speaks to the impact of his work, and how much the military valued that work," Eagan continued.

"It's an honor to be able to recognize him," German said. "I miss him, and think about him often. He was just such a good person."

"I wanted to thank Marcy and Matt and the rest of the family for allowing Chuck to share a great deal of his time for this base," said Col. Shawn Clouthier, 109th Airlift Wing commander. "We never really had a large conference room in this building for our headquarters, it means a lot to this base to get this. It only seemed fitting that we name it in honor of Chuck."

Marcy and Matt unveiled the plaque at the end of the ceremony. The plaque, which now hangs in the center of the conference room, reads:

"In recognition of his invaluable vision, determination and service to the 109th Airlift Wing, Schenectady County, the Greater Capital Region and New York State. A fierce advocate for the military, Chuck deeply valued the military presence in the Capital Region and endeavored to ensure its long-term viability and success."



Maj. Gen. Anthony German (right), New York Adjutant General, presents Marcy and Matt Steiner with the New York State Conspicuous Service Medal awarded to the late Chuck Steiner during a dedication ceremony here Aug. 4, 2017.

STORY |
Master Sgt.
Catharine Schmidt

PHOTOGRAPHY |
Senior Master Sgt.
William Gizara

AIRMAN RECLAIMS FITNESS AFTER PT FAIL

fitness

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY |
Staff Sgt. Stephanie Lambert

It was just another routine physical fitness test for Master Sgt. Jeffrey Jordan, a propulsion work leader assigned to the 109th Maintenance Squadron here, but it ended up being the wake-up call he didn't even know he needed. The cold reality of a PT failure gave Jordan the realization he could no longer skate by doing the minimum.

Jordan stated he passed all aspects of his fitness test, but failed to pass the waist measurement by a mere half-inch.

Jordan said his lifestyle before the failure consisted of poor eating habits and inactivity.

Master Sgt. Keith Eriole, non-commissioned officer in charge of the fitness program with the 109th Services Flight, taped Jordan three times and could not pass him because his waist was over acceptable inches allowed by Air Force standards.

"If an Airman fails a component of the fitness assessment they automatically fail the assessment, no matter how well they did on the other components," said Eriole.

"I felt miserable," said Jordan.

"I did what I had to do each year to pass with a minimum score by practicing only what I had to do, no more," said Jordan.

"In this case, Jordan failed his waist measurement; even though it was not by much there was nothing I could do for him at that point," said Eriole. "Fast forward to September 2017, Jordan passed every component including the waist measurement."

"I appreciate Eriole's integrity in the program, it forced me to take action to correct my own inadequacies and be able to look myself in the mirror," said Jordan.

"If failing the fitness assessment in April made him start living a healthier life style, then I'm all for that but the member decided to do that on his own; I was just doing my job," said Eriole.

The PT score affects all aspects of an Airman's military career; a failure could keep them from promotions and educational training opportunities, according to Air Force guidance.

"The fitness team will do everything in our power to help a member do well on the fitness assessment, because if you fail the assessment one time you are not eligible to be promoted, second time ineligible to reenlist and so forth," said Eriole.

"You can't wait and worry about passing once a year, it has to be continuous," said Jordan.

"For those personnel who struggle with fitness assessments, don't assume that you can show up for the fitness assessment and do well, because those are the members that often fail," said Eriole. "When I ask if they have been practicing, most of the time the answer is no; my advice is to keep practicing throughout the year and not wait until it's time to do the assessment."

Jordan advises Airmen struggling with PT to find a program that works for them and stick with it; consistency is key to long-term success.

Jordan began his fitness come-back with a couch to cross-fit six-week program, which he stuck with and continued.

"My current fitness regimen is three days of a cross-fit type workout and two days of cardio, while I maintain a healthy diet with a watchful eye on portion size," said Jordan.

"By continuing I feel stronger and more confident," he said.

Jordan said he encourages the Airmen in his unit with words that his coach used to encourage him along the way: "It's going to be a struggle at first, but it gets easier."

Jordan said he has planned to keep up the hard work and said that he may even try a 5-k in the future.

Airmen who may be struggling with low PT scores or have failed and would like help are urged to get in touch with the services fitness team or their unit fitness program monitor.

New York National Guard Troops help deliver Trees for Troops

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY |
Staff Sgt. Stephanie Lambert

BALLSTON SPA, N.Y. – New York National Guard Airmen and Soldiers volunteered their time to fill up a delivery truck with donated Christmas trees bound for military families on Monday, Nov. 27, at the Ellms Family Farm here.

This is the 13th year that the National Guard troops turned out alongside veterans and Patriot Guard riders to assist Ellms in the nationwide Trees for Troops initiative. Some three dozen volunteers were on hand to support the packing of trees with donated decorations and loading them for shipment.

“Having that little slice of home is a great reminder of how much the homefront cares,” said Chip Ellms, owner of the tree farm and coordinator of the event.

Approximately 150 trees donated by 15 local tree farms in Upstate New York were loaded onto a FedEx truck headed to Fort Bragg, North Carolina where they will be distributed to military families.

The Ellms family grows almost 800 trees per acre on 50 acres on the farm north of Albany, N.Y. The operation started in 1983 and has grown to become a year-around agro-tourism attraction.

The Ellms trees added to more than 200,000 trees donated since 2005 by the national program of the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation, in partnership with FedEx, delivers farm-grown trees to U.S. military personnel and their families from all branches stationed at more than 60 bases around the globe.

Many of the National Guard volunteers have previously deployed during the holidays and spoke about the impact that this kind of event can have on a deployed Soldier or Airman. Other volunteers have also been the family member missing their loved one.

Airman 1st Class John Lawlor, a medical technician assigned to the 139th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, part of the 109th Airlift Wing at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, N.Y., knows first-hand what it’s like to be without a family member on Christmas.

“My whole life, my father has been away every year so it hits close to home for me; people truly do care,” he said.

Lawlor’s father, Chief Master Sgt. John Lawlor, is also assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, and has deployed annually as part of the support of Operation Deep Freeze to Antarctica; the mission coincides with the holiday season every year.

Among the other volunteers was Edward Czuchrey, a Patriot Guard Rider and retired Air Force master sergeant.

“I think it’s a wonderful thing these folks do for the veterans; we do anything we can to help,” Czuchrey said.

The trees were packed with holiday decorations and cards made by children from the local Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake elementary and middle schools.



Master Sgt. Kyle Defeo, 109th Security Forces Squadron, helps load Christmas trees on a delivery truck as part of the Trees for Troops event at Ellms Family Farm in Ballston Spa, N.Y., on Nov. 27, 2017.

NYANG honors President Martin Van Buren

PHOTOGRAPHY |
Tech. Sgt. Stephen Girolami



Brig. Gen. Timothy LaBarge, the Chief of Staff for the New York Air National Guard and Command Chief Master Sgt. Denny Richardson, 109th Airlift Wing command chief, marked the 235th birthday of President Martin Van Buren by laying a wreath at Van Buren's grave site in Kinderhook, New York on Dec. 5, 2017. The annual event recognizes the former President Martin Van Buren, a Columbia County native who died on July 24, 1862 in Kinderhook, N.Y. He was born on Dec. 5, 1782. The United States Military honors former presidents by laying wreaths presented by the current president at their gravesites on the anniversary of their birth.





Finance Office leans forward

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY |
Staff Sgt. Stephanie Lambert

Hanging over the customer service window in the finance office is a sign that reads “lean forward”. This motto is one that Capt. James M. Roth, 109th Airlift Wing comptroller, strives to achieve every day.

“Lean forward” means to get out in front of issues before they become a problem, said Roth.

“We’re here to support the people here in any way possible; we’re trying to be proactive,” said Roth. “We are always available to answer questions.”

Roth said by calling the main number at (518) 344-2493 Airmen will be able to get an answer to their question regardless of who answers the phone.

“We are always striving to put the customer first,” said Senior Master Sgt. John Dowd, Comptroller Flight budget analyst.

“We have trained professionals who know about every aspect of the finance office and can offer excellent customer service,” said Roth.

Dowd said the finance team members step up and take on any challenge that may be presented to them.

The finance team doesn’t just handle the paychecks, but also assists with the Defense Travel System, certifying purchase requests and payment transactions to vendors, as well as allocating and tracking the budgets for the National Science Foundation and Wing funds.

The finance office deals with a heavy workload from the never-ending cycle of members going out the door in support of Operation Deep Freeze and Greenland, said Roth.

Another huge undertaking is finalizing the budget at the close out of each fiscal year with such a high-tempo of deployments, said Dowd.

“We don’t expect to be thanked for what we do for the Airmen; we’re here to support them,” said Roth.

Dowd said there will always be a conflict between providing speedy customer service while ensuring accuracy.

“We have a responsibility to the American taxpayer to be legally appropriate with the funds provided to our base,” said Dowd.

Roth has implemented briefings for Airmen who may need clarification on the requirements finance must adhere to and why.

“There will always be problems, if it’s a systemic one, let’s teach the Airmen through training,” said Roth.

Roth wants the finance office to make it as easy as possible for Airmen to do their job and not even think about finance.

“I can’t go out on the flightline and fix an aircraft, but I can make it easier for those who do by making sure their pay is correct and on time,” said Roth.

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- Tax Planning



PFC services are Purple, no cost, and confidential for:

All active service members, their families, surviving unmarried spouses, and service members separated/retired within the past 180 days. (Appointments held in base offices, conference rooms, and public meeting spaces.)

Your contact is:

Laurie Bonser, CFP, CPA, MBA
Personal Financial Counselor
Based: Stratton Air National Guard
Scotia, NY (50 mile service radius)
Phone: 518.948.7028
Email Address: PFC7.NY.NG@zeiders.com

Wing hosts emergency response symposium

By Maj. Andrew McUmbert, 109th Bioenvironmental Engineering

The 109th Medical Group's Bioenvironmental Engineering office led an emergency response symposium here Aug. 8 - 10, which consisted of presentations and demonstrations from multiple state and federal agencies.

The event resulted in shared knowledge of contingency operations within the Air National Guard Bioenvironmental Engineering community of practice. In total, BE shops from five Northeast U.S. bases attended the event. Several Airmen with the 109th AW also participated.

Broadly, the BE core mission consists of hazard recognition, evaluation and control across the spectrum of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats. The list of possible threat pathways includes routine industrial applications, water system operation, and local or regional disasters. While in-garrison, qualified BE personnel maintain a close familiarity with deployable field detection assets.

The intent of the symposium was twofold: build BE knowledge of emergency response assets at local, state, and Federal levels, and create networking opportunities for ANG members. The schedule consisted of multiagency briefings, demonstrations and tours. The presenters were composed of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH), US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Department of Energy (DOE), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), 2nd Civil Support Team (WMD-CST), and National Park Service (NPS). On the last day, attendees completed a military heritage tour at Saratoga National Park.



JTF 3 Debris Clearing Team conducts exercise

By Senior Master Sgt. Greg Mihalko, 109th Emergency Manager

The Joint Task Force 3 Debris Clearing Team teamed up with members of the New York Guard led by Maj. Guy Van Baalen on Nov. 4 to exercise the \$176,000 debris clearing package in a limited one-day exercise.

Team members were placed into a scenario that morning when the Emergency Operations Center manager performed a mock recall. The debris clearing team was notified that excessive rains in Keene Valley caused a mudslide, blocking NYS Route 73 and stranding residents on the north side of the event. The team was ordered to convoy to the mock disaster site located behind Building 52 and make the roadway passable for vehicle traffic.

“The New York Guard is pleased to be participating in this joint exercise,” Van Baalen said. “Events such as this serve our continuing efforts to integrate with the National Guard and Air National Guard and do our part to ensure the safety of our fellow citizens.”

The objectives and skills evaluated in this exercise included the activation of the debris clearing team during a very busy time of year for the wing, the operation of the equipment and assessment of its condition, and the speed in which the chainsaw operators and skid steer drivers could work in such an austere environment.

“We need to be trained and ready to provide this kind of support whenever called to do so,” said Col. Maureen Murphy, 109th Mission Support Group commander. “Having our roster supplemented with skilled members of the New York Guard increases our readiness and capabilities, especially during the Operation Deep Freeze season. I would like to thank everyone who participated in this training exercise.”

Although the exercise was expected to run over multiple days, the debris clearing team managed to remove an estimated 16,000 pounds of trees and mud in a mere four hours.

For more information on emergency management activities, please contact Senior Master Sgt. Greg Mihalko at 344-2312.



Courtesy photo

Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RCSBP)

Did you know?

Retired pay stops when you die? The Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RCSBP) is the only program that allows you to leave a percentage of your future Air Force retired pay as a monthly annuity to your beneficiaries. RCSBP pays a benefit to your eligible survivors each and every month.

Once a member attains 20 years of eligible service toward retirement they will receive a Survivor Benefit election packet in the mail.

You have three options regarding RCSBP protection for your family:

Option A (DECLINE TO MAKE AN ELECTION UNTIL AGE 60)

If you choose not to participate in the Plan at this time, and you live to age 60, you will be given another opportunity to enroll in the SBP. If you die before age 60, your survivor(s) will be ineligible to receive a percentage of your retired pay.

Option B (DEFERRED ANNUITY)

Provide coverage for an annuity to begin on the 60th anniversary of your birth, if you die before age 60, or to begin immediately if you should die after age 60. For example: Option B elected at age 45 and you die at age 47, your beneficiary WOULD NOT receive the annuity for 13 years, when you would have been age 60.

Option C (IMMEDIATE ANNUITY)

Provide coverage for an annuity to begin immediately, whether you die before or after age 60. For example: Option C elected at age 45 and you die at age 47, your beneficiary would receive the annuity effective the day after your death. It is imperative that a selection be made within a timely manner or the default selection of "Spouse only" (C) will be entered. Selection must be made and returned within 90 days of RCSBP package receipt! For more information about this program and the options available, please visit your FSS Customer Service Section or click [here](#).



109th AW Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC)

Maj. Heather Miner-Goetz, 109th AW, 344-2500

109th AW Victim Advocates

Maj. Amanda Coonradt, 139th AS/ 109th AW IG, 344-2024

Capt. Jenny Hitzges, 139th AS, 344-2302

2nd Lt. Nicholas Chakurmanian, 139th AS, 344-2586

Senior Master Sgt. Shawn Talbot, 109th MXS, 344-2685

Tech. Sgt. David Rodriguez, 139th AS, 344-2401

Staff Sgt. Matthew Gleason, 109th LRS, 344-2376

Staff Sgt. Molly Kennerley, 109th MXS, 344-2369

Senior Airman Heather Jackson, 109th MSG/CSS, 344-2692

109th Airmen receive CCAF Degrees



The following Airmen received their Community College of the Air Force Degrees during a Wing commander's call Sept. 17, 2017:

(Back row, from left) Tech. Sgt. Christopher Pierson, Fire Science; Chief Master Sgt. Michael Pingitore, Transportation; Master Sgt. William Roe, Bioenvironmental Engineering Technology; Senior Master Sgt. Kelly Eustis, Criminal Justice; Master Sgt. Seth Bathrick, Safety; Tech. Sgt. Matthew Murray, Aviation Management; Tech. Sgt. Robert Harrington, Information Systems Technology; Staff Sgt. Andrew Archambeault, Avionic Systems Technology; Staff Sgt. Joseph Dugan, Aviation Maintenance Technology.

(Front row, from left) Master Sgt. Lynette Tangredi, Human Resource Management; Staff Sgt. Ethan Schager, Aviation Maintenance Technology; Tech. Sgt. Daniel White Jr., Human Resource Management; Staff Sgt. Robert Baldascini II, Aviation Maintenance Technology; Staff Sgt. Grace Varney, Information Management; Master Sgt. Darci Novack, Criminal Justice; Tech. Sgt. Kimberly Labunski, Transportation; Master Sgt. Aletha Camack, Human Resource Management; Master Sgt. Allison Snyder, Health Care Management; Senior Airman Jennatte Berger, Avionic Systems Technology; Tech. Sgt. Devin Reilly, Emergency Management.

PHOTOGRAPHY | Senior Master Sgt. William Gizara



File photo

David V. Stott Scholarship Winner

Airman 1st Class Rachael Wehrenberg, 109th Medical Group, was selected as the winner of the 2017 David V. Stott Scholarship. Airman Wehrenberg is pursuing a degree in Occupational Therapy through Russell Sage College. Tech. Sgt. David Stott was a member of the 139th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron as well as the 109th MDG. Stott passed away in 2003 following a short illness. His parents continue to carry on his memory by offering a scholarship in his name each year.

PROMOTIONS

May 21 - Dec. 1, 2017

Major

Dia Beshara AS
Drew Brewer AS
David Price AS

Captain

Adetokunbo Ajibulu MDG

First Lieutenant

Joshua Eldredge AS

Chief Master Sergeant

Michael Blake MXG
Deborah Nordyke AW

Senior Master Sergeant

Jennifer Dippo AES
David Vesper AS

Master Sergeant

John Albert MXS
Patrick Bornt AS
David Burt AES
Chad Conti OG
James Cronce MXS
George Dunkley AMXS
Sara Eldred AES
Jeremiah Henderson AW
Thomas Heyman AES
Michael Ignecia FSS
Shane Long LRS
Lukasz Liaszkiewicz CF
Jeffrey Lyons CF
Robert Madison AES
Ernesto Morales SFS
Joshua Myers CES
Michael Peckham SFS
Felicia Valentine MXG

Technical Sergeant

Natale Alessandro MXS
Connie Anderson AES
Amanda Cimorelli OSS
James Comstock LRS
Jonathan Corcoran SFS
Shayne Galarneau MXS

Technical Sergeant (Cont.)

David Gillis OSS
Michael Ginalski MXS
James Healey AS
Sabrina Healey AES
Chad Hotaling LRS
Trevor Hunter MXS
Robert Johnson FSS
Matthew King LRS
Aaron Marshall MXG
Patrick McCormack MXG
Luke Morizio FSS
Brian Reith OG
Joshua Spagnola 2dCST
Theodore Stickney AS
Laurence Truscello AW
Daniel White Jr. FSS

Staff Sergeant

Aaron Bagwell AS
Jennatte Berger MXS
Leighann Brash FSS
Courtney Cereo AS
Stephen Cernak III SFS
Marc Cerrone SFS
Sarah Chandler AES
Samuel Comini AS
Andrew Congon SFS
John Cox LRS
Darren Durfee Jr. LRS
Ryan Esposito MXS
Jarrod Fowler MDG
Frederick Freeman SFS
Jeremy Frye LRS
Lake Gibbins AMXS
Alanna Guay SFS
Patrick Irwin CES
Amy Kintner FSS
Brendan Leach SFS
Gregory Markel LRS
Armando Maldonado SFS
Troy McCullen AS
Lisa Mierek MSG
Samantha Mills MXS
Esmeralda Monteparo MXS
Isidora Monteparo MDG

Staff Sergeant (Cont.)

Wyatt Peters AS
Vincent Pricolo MXS
Brian Purtell MXS
Perry Rayner FSS
Dominic Scaringe SFS
Jamie Spaulding AW
Andrew Tomlinson AES
Brett Voelker AMXS
David Wallace MXS
Scott Winchell Jr. LRS
Sean Winters SFS

Senior Airman

Ayla Bardin MDG
Anthony Bartlett AS
Bianca Boccio MDG
Ashely Bochenek MDG
Kayla Casey CPTF
Israel Covey CF
James Denney MXS
Matthew Disorbo FSS
Rebecca Eldred AES
Bryan Fidd JFHQ
Benjamin Gunn AES
Rebekah Hentnik FSS
Ryan Leach LRS
Margaret Lunquist FSS
Nicholas Macholdt AS
James McPartlin OSS
Angelo Messineo AS
Kyle Mullan AES
Matthew Paparella MDG
Christian Ruiz OSS
Corey Russo AS
Kevin Sarsick CES
Stephanie Seney MDG
Josana Stone FSS
Daniel Taormina AS
Taylor Wetsky MDG

Airman 1st Class

Thomas Connolly STUF
Nicholas Maniacek STUF
Jonathan Magaletti AES
Paige Shovelton OSS

AWARDS

May 2 - Dec. 1, 2017

Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Michele Kilgore AW
Lt. Col. Ty Randall MXG
Lt. Col. (Dr.) Bret Wood MDG
Maj. Steven Sweet AS
Senior Master Sgt. Greg Mihalko CES
Master Sgt. David Morrison MDG

Air Force Commendation Medal

Chaplain (Capt.) Xiomara Diaz AW
Capt. Salem Jacobsen LRS
Chaplain (Capt.) Julie Taylor AW
2nd Lt. Benjamin Reiser OSS
Senior Master Sgt. Marsha Barrows LRS
Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Graham MDG
Master Sgt. Scott Bailey MDG
Master Sgt. Johnny Cope CF
Master Sgt. Sarah Helligrass CF
Master Sgt. Brian Kissinger CES
Master Sgt. Jason Moore CES
Master Sgt. David Morrison MDG
Master Sgt. Joshua Myers CES
Master Sgt. Wanda Yarbor MSG
Tech. Sgt. Brian Devlin CES
Tech. Sgt. Kevin Facteau CES
Staff Sgt. Matthew Gleason LRS
Staff Sgt. Brittney Morse CES
Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodgers AS
Staff Sgt. Grace Varney FSS

Air Force Achievement Medal

Capt. Eric Chan AS
Master Sgt. Scott Bailey MDG
Master Sgt. Joshua Bartman SFS
Master Sgt. Ernesto Morales SFS

Air Force Achievement Medal (Cont)

Master Sgt. Felicia Valentine MXG
Master Sgt. Roger Yurko CF
Tech. Sgt. Connie Anderson AES
Tech. Sgt. Erin Byrns CPTF
Tech. Sgt. Come Ketchakeu AW
Tech. Sgt. Stephen Marra AW
Staff Sgt. Chad Alaimo AW
Staff Sgt. Curt Beall CPTF
Staff Sgt. Ronald Butler Jr. MDG
Staff Sgt. Stephen Cernak III SFS
Staff Sgt. Marc Cerrone SFS
Staff Sgt. Gabriella Diaz MDG
Staff Sgt. Stephanie Dirolf SFS
Staff Sgt. Alanna Guay SFS
Staff Sgt. Elijah Hammondwood AES
Staff Sgt. John Konczeski CF
Staff Sgt. Brendan Leach SFS
Staff Sgt. Berardino Mancino SFS
Staff Sgt. James Olson CES
Staff Sgt. Jide Osipitan SFS
Staff Sgt. Brian Pelletier CPTF
Staff Sgt. Thomas Rorick SFS
Staff Sgt. Dominic Scaringe SFS
Staff Sgt. Christopher Smith MXS
Staff Sgt. Andrew Tomlinson AES
Senior Airman Ayla Bardin AES
Senior Airman Ashley Bochenek MDG
Senior Airman Jason Burr MXS
Senior Airman Heather Jackson SFS
Senior Airman Alex Listing AMXS
Senior Airman Rafael Lopez CES
Senior Airman Emily Roth MDG
Senior Airman Scott Squadere AES
Senior Airman Daniel Guthrie LRS
Senior Airman Nyan Tun MXS

RETIREMENTS

May - November

Karl Burghart
Scott Carpenter
Marlene Frankovic
Leslie Gould
Charles Hatch
Eugene Kaufmann
Michael Kelly
Stephen Maher
Ross Manwarren
James Maunz
Maureen Moffett
Scott Molyneaux
Joshua Nielson
Mary PerezTucker

Brian Ray
Paul Russo
Damaris Santiago Singer
Sueann Stone
Jeremy Westervelt
Anthony Williams
Mark Wilson

109th Airlift Wing
1 Air National Guard Road
Scotia, NY 12302-9752



Photo by Master Sgt. Catharine Schmidt

Mission statement

The 109th Airlift Wing employs the Department of Defense's only ski-equipped aircraft to conduct operations in remote Polar Regions. We train, equip and deploy premier, combat-ready Airmen to support state and national objectives.

Vision statement

Unparalleled tactical airlift to remote polar environments, propelled by highly trained, combat-ready Airmen.